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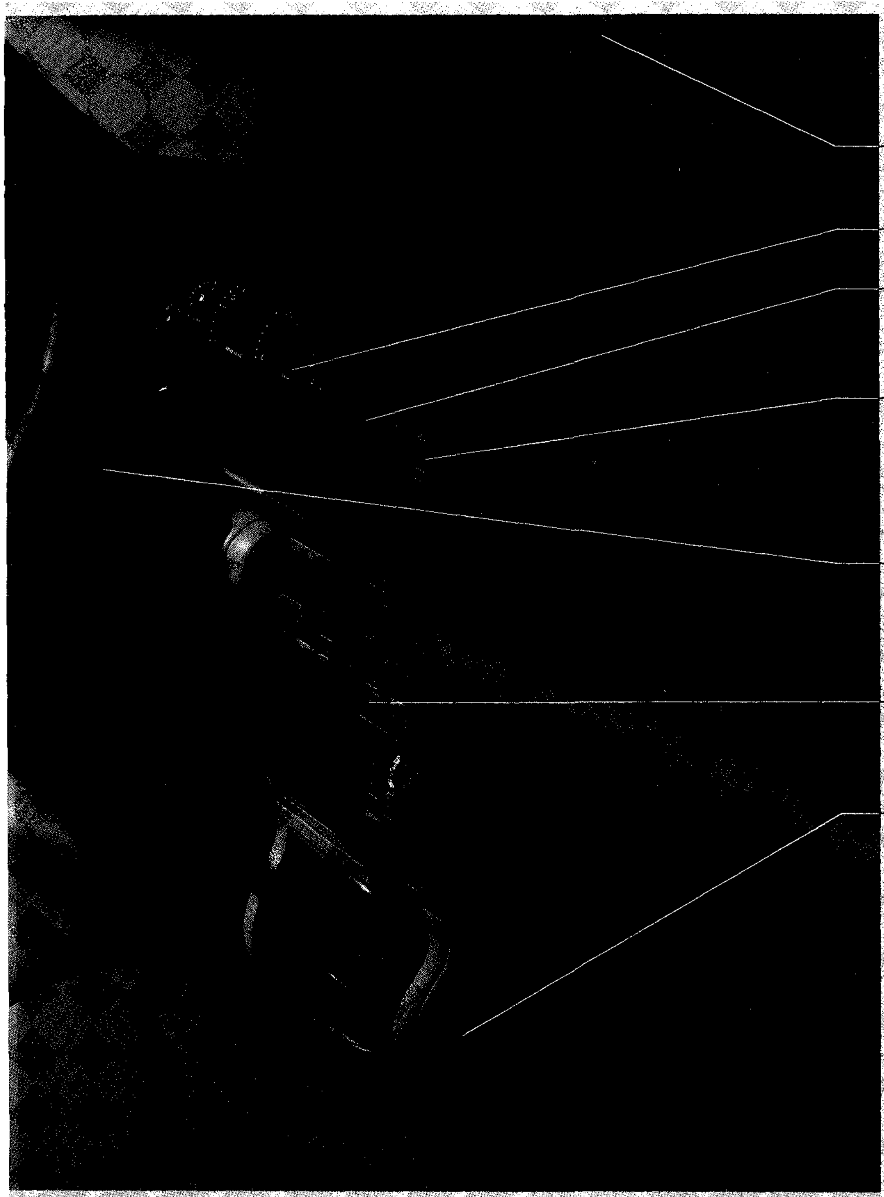

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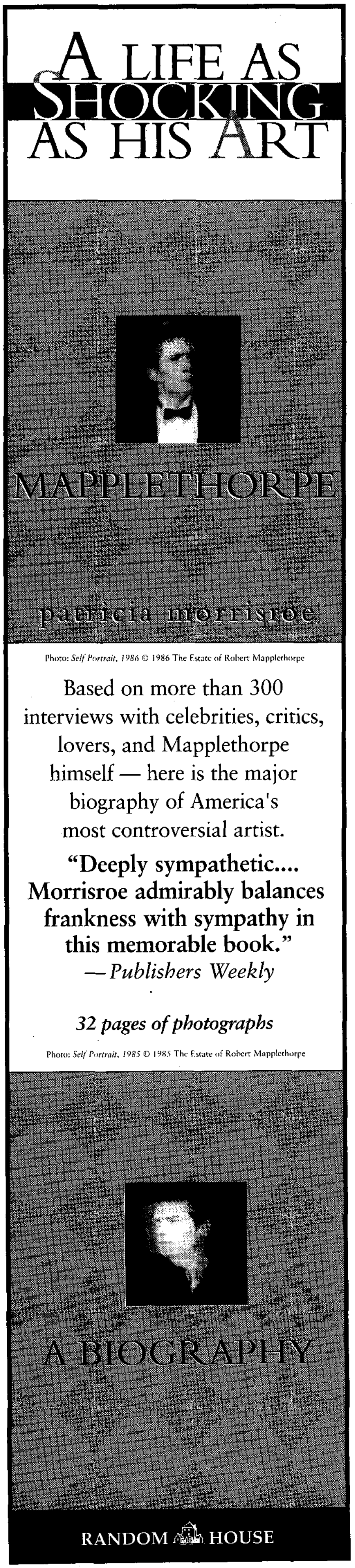
A LIFE AS SHOCKING AS HIS ART

MAPPLETHORPE

patricia morrisroe

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THE NEW YORKER

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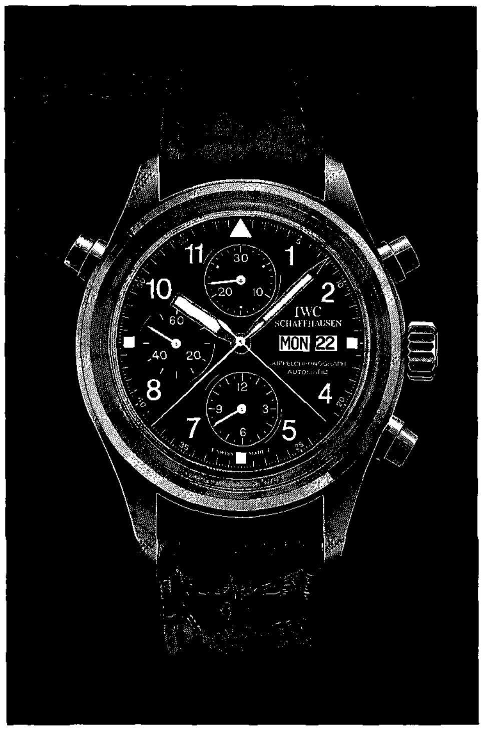

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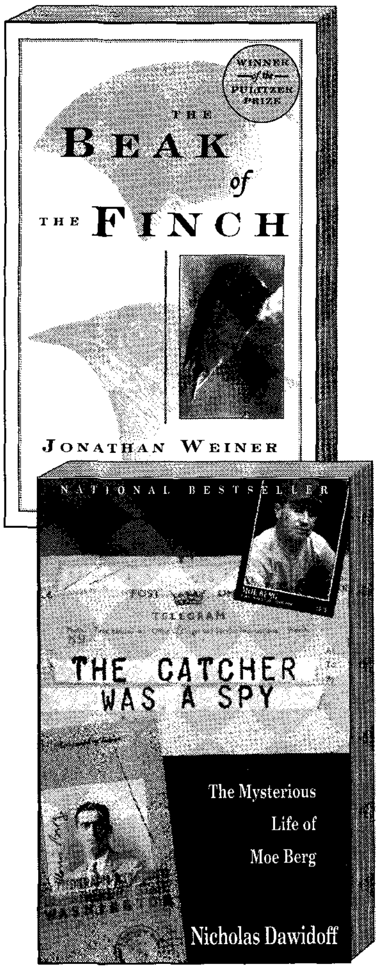

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COMMENT

THE WRONG BOX

Why public-school students are falling through the Net.

FOR years, conservatives, corporate executives, politicians, and pundits have called for reforming public schools by making them more like private business. But somehow the effort to "privatize" public schools never seems to result in public schools' getting what private schools have: smaller classes, nicer facilities, larger libraries, up-to-the-minute technology. When public schools are exposed to "market forces," what they get is something like Channel One, a program that features ten minutes of news jazzed up with MTV-style graphics and two minutes of commercials for such products as junk food, athletic gear, and cosmetics.

Channel One is the creation of the entrepreneur Christopher Whittle, and, like a monster in a Hollywood horror flick, it just won't die. Whittle's idea was to lend technology, in the form of television sets and other audiovisual equipment, to cash-strapped public schools; in return, the schools would pledge to show the program at the same time each day. Never mind that kids no longer needed to be introduced to the wonders of television. Even a family that doesn't have a telephone may well have a TV and some accompanying service: a month of basic cable in New York costs fifteen dollars and nineteen cents—less than the average phone bill, and far less than a single hardcover book. The reason television is so cheap, of course, is that it's essentially underwritten by advertisers; in fact, a more potent advertising vehicle has yet to be devised. (In the case of Channel One, advertisers pay hundreds of thousands of dollars a day for the privilege of selling their wares to a captive, youthful audience.) But with television constantly blaring in beauty parlors, bars, and fast-food restaurants (to say nothing of every home in the land), do we really need it in the public schools?

Whittle is also the titular head of the Edison Project, the much ballyhooed scheme to create a chain of for-profit schools across the country. Last year, though, his empire began to crumble financially, and he was forced to sell Channel One to K-III Communications, a subsidiary of the leveraged-

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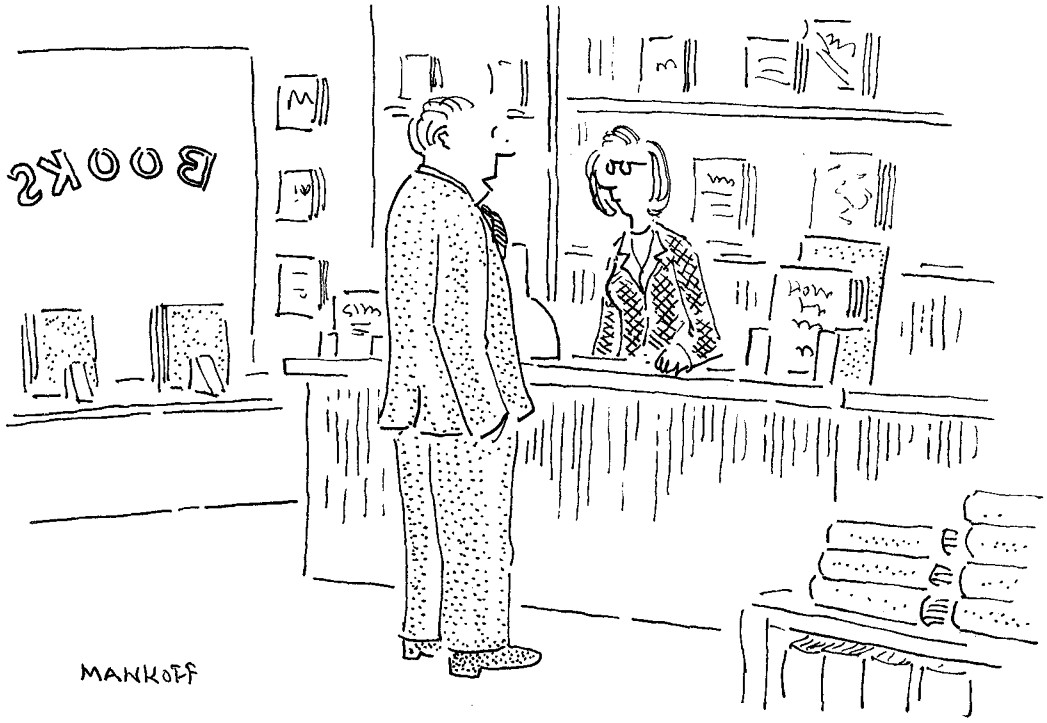
buyout firm Kohlberg Kravis Roberts & Company. Now K-III Communications is trying to get a return on its investment. While Whittle managed to hawk Channel One successfully to almost every state in the union, he was barred from one of the most lucrative markets: New York State. This spring, K-III launched an intense lobbying campaign to get Channel One into New York's public schools—and so, in effect, to boost its ratings. Last month, despite the opposition of parents' groups, the teachers' unions, and the Board of Regents, the State Assembly's Education Committee approved a bill that, if adopted, will permit the state's public schools to show Channel One. The committee reasons that in a time of dire budget cuts Channel One provides the only way to get badly needed technology into the classroom. The legislature, however, is about forty years behind this particular technology curve.

What initially excited people about Whittle and his Edison Project was his pledge to equip his schools with the technology that public schools *do* need: not TVs but computers. He promised a laptop on every lap. Long before people became obsessed with the Internet, he proposed wiring students' houses so they could work from home by modem and communicate with classmates and teachers in their own schools and with people across the country. But building this type of "national information infrastructure," as Vice-President Gore has called it, is still a good distance into the future, and it will take an enormous investment of capital, both private and public, to make it happen. (Not just for hardware, either: teachers, many of whom got their jobs when mimeographs were still de rigueur, will need training, too.) The Edison Project is no longer making such promises (it has been cut back in scope and ambition because of financial difficulties), but many private schools and some of the better public schools are already on line, and their students are taking "keyboarding" as early as third grade and surfing the Net long before junior high. The kids who attend these schools are likely to be those who need exposure to computers least. A 1993 Census Bureau report found that nearly sixty-two per cent of all families with incomes of seventy-five thousand dollars or more owned personal computers. Unsurprisingly, the percentage dropped with income, to just under seven per cent for those with an annual income below ten thousand dollars.

The census figures on minorities are equally striking: twice as many whites as either blacks or Latinos have home computers. Students from poor and minority families generally attend poorer public schools, where they are lucky if they have any exposure to computers, much less modems, the Net, or any other frills. In New York City, most schools aren't even wired adequately for computers. (For that matter, many New York City public schools still have rotary phones—and only one or two of them.) The Vice-President has challenged the telecommunications industry to narrow the technology gap; if the industry doesn't act he intends to call for legislation directing it to provide universal access to the information infrastructure by connecting public schools, libraries, and hospitals to the Net. This requirement could be a condition of licensing, much the way telephone companies were obliged to offer service to rural areas in return for access to more lucrative markets.

Technology is increasingly seen as yet another force that is widening the social and economic divide that already exists in American society. Even Hollywood has noticed. In this summer's science-fiction thriller "Johnny Mnemonic," which is based on a short story by William Gibson, the coiner of the term "cyberspace," the world is split into two classes. The rulers are global corporations, whose most prized possessions are data and computer know-how; Keanu Reeves is their representative. The ruled are a ragtag gang of "Lo-Teks," who hang out in alleyways and bombed-out buildings and are shut out of the Net; their leader is played by Ice-T. Gibson recently said of his story, "This is what will happen if you quit taking care of poor people, and the rich bunker themselves further." It's Boyz N the Twenty-First Century, but it doesn't have to be. Public schools are the obvious place to begin closing the gap.

—Sara Mosle



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IN THE MAIL

MAPPLETHORPE THE ARTIST

As a friend of both Patricia Morrisroe and Howard Read, I feel I must comment on Peter Conrad's characterization of Read, one of Robert Mapplethorpe's dealers, in his June 5th review of Morrisroe's important biography of Mapplethorpe. Conrad unfairly distills Morrisroe's reporting into a caricature of Read as a motorized pitchman. To ignore Read's passion, knowledge, and eloquence on the subject of photography is to grossly misunderstand someone whose contribution to the medium (like Robert Mapplethorpe's) was to discard apologetic inclinations and present photography with an assurance that had previously been applied only to painting and sculpture.

Conrad's argument that Mapplethorpe made a quasi-Faustian bargain to trade the true artistry of his most pornographic work for the decorative still-lifes and nudes that brought him commercial success is old and not without some merit, but its hard-line political correctness denies the power and originality of Mapplethorpe's photographs of flowers and more traditional subjects. Those works were best-sellers, partly because of Read's salesmanship but primarily because of the untraditional intensity of their beauty, vision, and execution.

James Danziger
New York City

WACO LEGACIES

Your piece on Janet Reno and Waco (Annals of Accountability, by Peter J. Boyer, May 15th) was informative yet troubling. What is most disturbing is the implication that the F.B.I. was able to use allegations of child abuse to prod Ms. Reno into action, knowing that it was her hot button. If true, this means that she is a weak official with no leadership skills, who can be manipulated by subordinates into making a decision. Furthermore, she must be extremely naïve if she thought that an apocalypse-minded religious group, after being tortured by government agents for fifty-one days, would respond to additional attacks by sending its children into the arms of the tormentors. Those children paid the ultimate price for Reno's naïveté, and it's obscene that their deaths can be ignored in the rush to crown Reno a hero merely for saying "I am accountable." Those three words are pretty small when measured against the scores of bodies pulled from that compound.

Felecia Barbaro
Brooklyn, N.Y.

I wonder when Reno and others (including the self-styled militias) will recognize the futility of using violence to counter violence, or threats of it. It seems to me that the cycle of violence will diminish only when we have the courage and will to insist on negotiations with "outlaws," and can thereby come to understand their grievances. With honest talk there's at least a better chance of finding sane solutions than with guns, tanks, and bombs.

Ann Morrissett Davidon
Philadelphia, Pa.

Janet Reno's explanation that she ordered the raid on Waco to save the children recalls the rationale behind Anita Bryant's earlier and equally suspect crusade against homosexuality. The proclaimed need to "save the children" is being used more and more by public figures (who seem to be regressing into infancy themselves—you can't see the trees for the Forrest Gumps), and smacks of Fascist propaganda. Such reasoning is nothing more than an excuse to demonize sexuality and raise the spectre of deviance against those whose opposing views threaten the status quo. Ironically, the same questionable sentimentality was invoked after the Oklahoma blast. The nation bemoaned the loss of "innocent" children (and the mourners hugged Teddy bears to their breasts on television) as if the rest of the victims of this cruel and inane response to Reno's raid were somehow less worthy of our attention.

BROOKS PETERS
New York City

WOID TO DA WISE

In da title "What's the Good Word?" (by Calvin Trillin) of da Shouts & Murmurs section of da May 15th *New Yorker*, I believe you misspelled da article "da" as "the" and da noun "woid" as "word." Uddawise, it's a pretty good issue.

JOHN M. KRENN
Rockport, Mass.

A LIGHTER LOOK

As a practicing Catholic, I am appalled at the thin skins shown by some of my fellow-Christians in their reaction to Art Spiegelman's drawing on the Tax Day/Easter edition of *The New Yorker* ("Theology of the Tax Cut," April 17th, and In the Mail, May 22nd). Is our faith really so precarious that we need to give up our sense of humor? After all, it wasn't Christ on the cover but the Easter Bunny—a symbol of the secular side of the holiday in the same way that Santa Claus is a symbol of the commercial side of Christmas.

I am further disturbed by a nagging feeling that if the artist had been named Patrick O'Donnell or Billy Bob Wilson or otherwise possessed any sort of "Christian" credentials, instead of being a well-known Jewish humorist and commentator, the attacks might have been a lot less personal, the tone a little less aggrieved.

Lighten up, folks. Let's take back the title of Christian from the narrow-minded and self-righteous.

DOROTHY COLE DOMRZALSKI
Albuquerque, N.M.

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GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

THE THEATRE

OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

(Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.)

Chronicle of a Death Foretold—Lincoln Center Theatre presents a musical adaptation of Gabriel Garcia Márquez's novel, directed and choreographed by Graciela Daniele. Two previews on June 14. Opens June 15 at 6:45. (Plymouth, 236 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

Crumbs from the Table of Joy—A Southern black family moves North in the fifties in pursuit of a better life. Written by Lynn Nottage and directed by Joe Morton. In previews through June 18. Opens June 20 at 8. (Second Stage, Broadway at 76th St. 873-6103.)

J. P. Morgan Saves the Nation—En Garde Arts' new site-specific musical, about the famous financier, is being staged on the steps of Federal Hall. The intersection of Wall and Broad Streets is closed Tuesday through Sunday evenings. Preview on June 14. Opens June 15 at 8:45. (279-4200.)

The Play's the Thing—J. Smith-Cameron is a singer, Jay Goede is her composer fiancé, and Peter Frechette is a playwright who tries to keep them together, in Ferenc Molnár's comedy, which, in this adaptation by P. G. Wodehouse, had its Broadway première in 1926. Directed by Gloria Muzio. Previews begin June 17. (Roundabout, Broadway at 45th St. 869-8400.)

Sam's Tormented Angels—The Swedish troupe Teater Albatross presents a collective work incorporating music, poetry, and storytelling, inspired by Allen Ginsberg's elegy for his mother, "Kaddish." June 15-25. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

The Springhill Singing Disaster—Karen Trott plays all the roles, and all the guitars, in her comedy about the tribulations of a calamity-ridden folksinger. Norman René directed. In previews. (Playwrights Horizons, 416 W. 42nd St. 279-4200.)

OPENED RECENTLY

After-Play—Anne Meara's comedy, recently seen at Manhattan Theatre Club, has moved to a new venue, with Ms. Meara in a starring role, along with Barbara Barrie, Larry Keith, and Merwin Goldsmith. (Reviewed in our issue of 2/13/95.) (Theatre Four, 424 W. 55th St. 239-6200.)

All About Steve: Musings of an Ebony Queer—In his new solo work, Stephen Patterson takes a comic look at growing up gay, black, and liberal. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 923-9300.)

Arcadia—Despite some casting glitches, the American première of Tom Stoppard's 1993 play, which shuttles between 1809 and the present, is an elegant production of an enormous theatrical feat. In a kind of intellectual mystery story, Stoppard provides the audience with the exhilarating illusion of omniscience, allowing us to solve a riddle of history from clues and connections that the characters, caught in time, do not see. Directed by Trevor Nunn. (4/17/95) (Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Buttons on Broadway—Red Buttons celebrates his sixtieth year in show business with a retrospective one-man revue. (Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 239-6200.)

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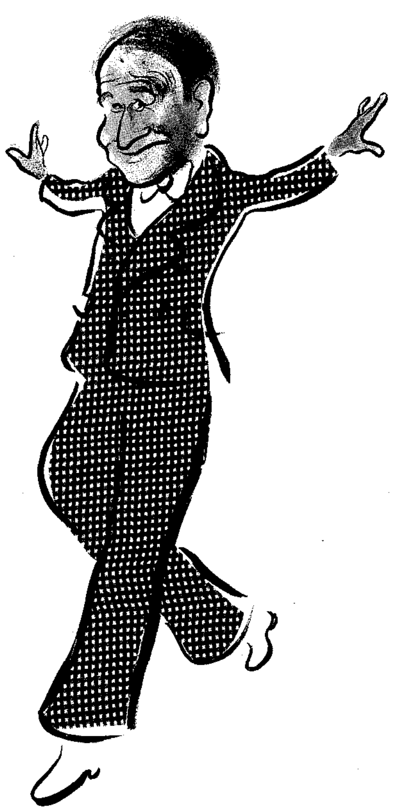
The Compleat Works of Wllm Shkspr (Abridged)—This slapstick hour-and-a-half romp through the Bard's œuvre, carried out by three fine young gentlemen in high-tops, is utterly sophomoric and a complete waste of time—like some of the best things in life. (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 307-4100.)

Damn Yankees—Jerry Lewis, the King of Comedy and the King of France, is now, in his Broadway début, the Prince of Darkness—the Devil himself. The old pro delivers the goods. And Charlotte d'Amboise, a sensational Lola, delivers the goods and then some. (Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 307-4100.)



Red Buttons, in "Buttons on Broadway."

DEMETRIOS PSILLOS

Death Defying Acts—Three subpar one-act comedies, by David Mamet, Elaine May, and Woody Allen, that have the words "Written to Order" stamped all over them. (3/20/95) (Variety Arts, Third Ave. at 14th St. 239-6200.)

The Donahue Sisters—In Geraldine Aron's thin comedy-drama, three siblings—a homebody, an addled London housewife, and a jaded New York writer—gather at their family's home in Ireland for some sisterly sniping, a huge joint, and a few snorts of vodka. At the very end they recall a childhood atrocity; the revelation is so sudden and unexpected that when the house lights come up you wonder whether they're going to go back down for another act. (Irish Arts Center, 553 W. 51st St. 757-3318.)

Fortune's Fools—A sitcom look at modern marriage and relationships, centering on a couple that is headed for the altar (Danton Stone and Dorrie Joiner) and their best man (Tuc Watkins) and maid of honor (Marissa Chibas). The stereotypical characters are likable enough, and the four actors—especially Watkins—bring the flimsy dialogue to life. (Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St. 989-2020.)

Gangster Apparel—A comedy, by Richard Vetere, about two former mob hit men living under the government's witness-protection program. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 647-0202. Closes July 1.)

The Good Woman of Setzuan—The Independent Theatre Company's production of Bertolt Brecht's 1943 play—about the gods' search for one good person in all of China—lacks both irony and passion, even though some of the actors in the smaller roles are terrific. Paul Todaro directed and composed the songs and incidental music. (House of Candles Theatre, 99 Stanton St. 353-3088. Closes June 24.)

Hamlet—London's Almeida Theatre has brought over a postmodern production whose refusal to risk interpretation reflects Britain's current bland and winded state. Ralph Fiennes seems almost as unwilling to enter the vortex of Hamlet's torment as Hamlet himself is to take action. But his performance is a stylish event; he radiates an elegance of spirit that rivets the audience with its sense of unspoken mystery. Directed by Jonathan Kent. (5/15/95) (Belasco, 111 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Having Our Say—Sadie and Bessie Delany, two sisters who have passed the hundred-year mark, presented their vivid life stories in a 1993 best-seller; the book has been adapted beautifully from the page to the stage by Emily Mann, who also directed. Gloria Foster and Mary Alice are brilliant as the sisters, who were taught by their family to "reach high" despite the dogging of Jim Crow. (4/24/95) (Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 239-6200.)

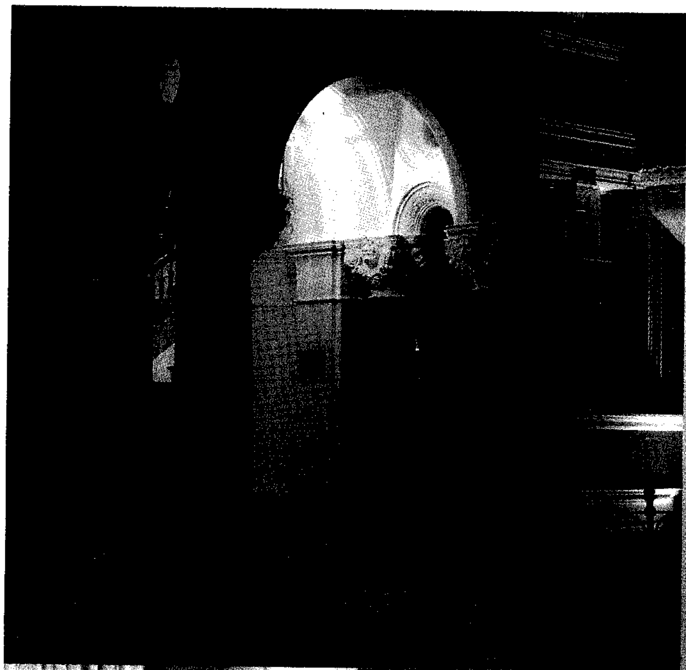
The Heiress—A revival of Ruth and Augustus Goetz's 1947 adaptation of Henry James's "Washington Square," directed by Gerald Gutierrez. Cherry Jones, who plays the title character, is exquisitely—almost unbearably—vulnerable. And the wonderful Frances Sternhagen is touching and funny as a widowed aunt. (3/20/95) (Cort, 138 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

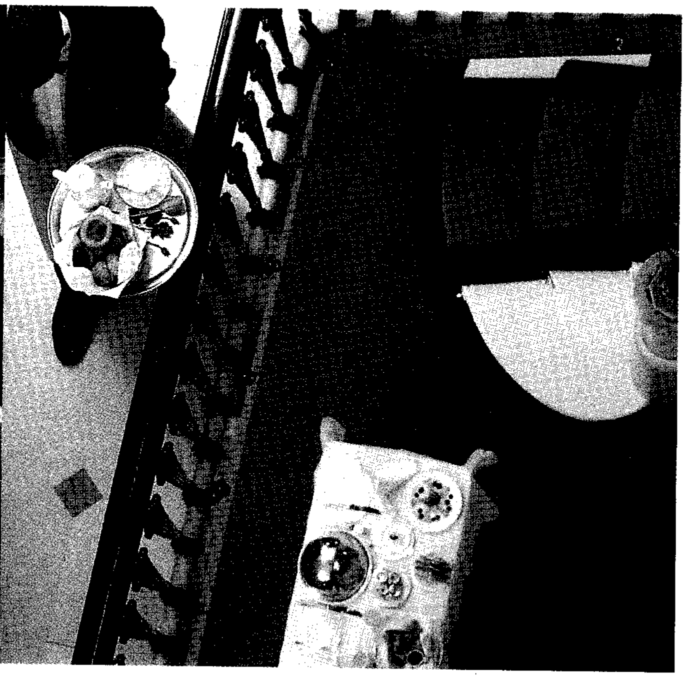
Homo Americanus—Purgatorio Ink presents Assurbanipal Babilla's Magic Realist drama, set in the future, about the search for love and beauty in a world of horror, disease, and death. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 874-6310. Closes June 25.)

How to Succeed in Business Without Really Trying—In this revival of Frank Loesser's 1961 musical, Matthew Broderick has polish and timing, but it's Lillias White's gospel solo in "Brotherhood of Man" that lifts the audience into a zone of joy. As a paradigm for the Broadway musical's con game—winning the public's heart while picking its pocket—her display of guile made glorious is as good as it gets. (4/24/95) (Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 307-4100.)

Hundreds of Hats—A salute to lyricist-librettist Howard Ashman's musical-theatre and film work. (WPA Theatre, 519 W. 23rd St. 206-0523.)

Indiscretions—The brightest spot in this production of Jean Cocteau's "Les Parents Terribles"—a dark comedy about the perversi-





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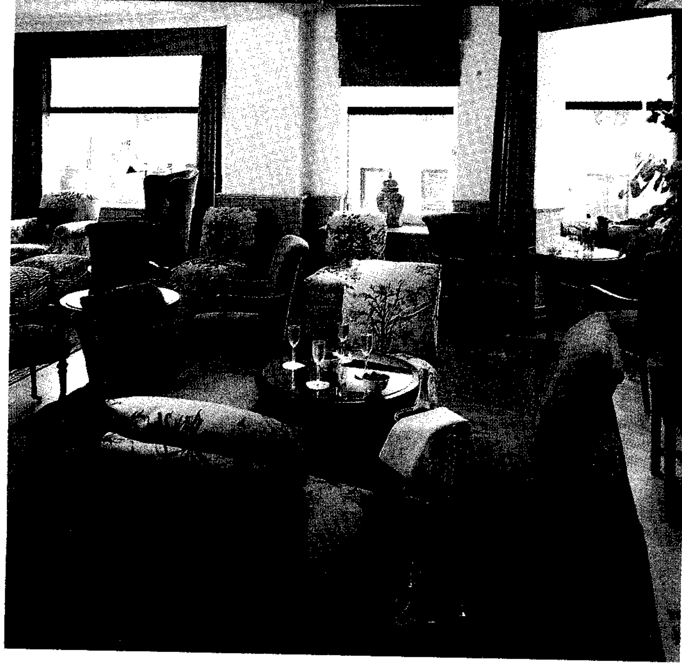
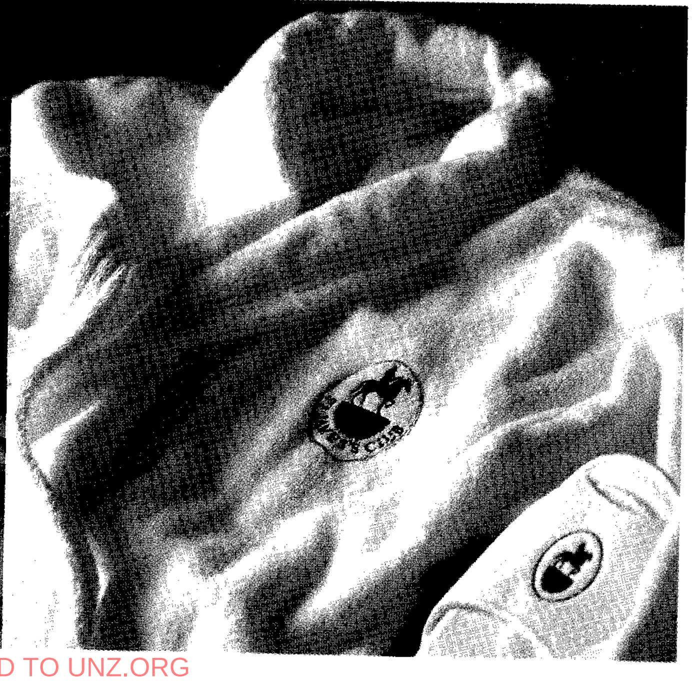
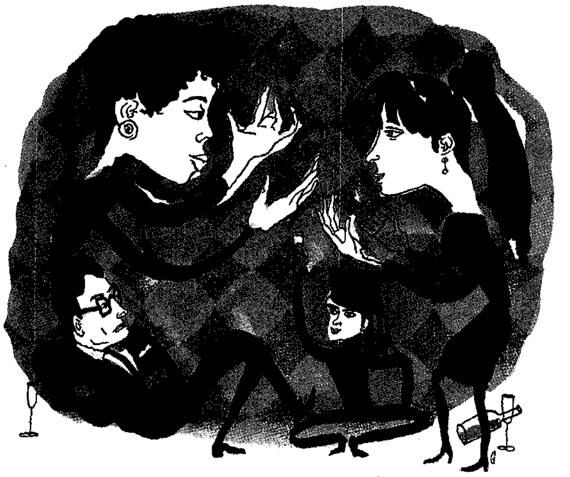




ties of desire in family life—is Eileen Atkins, who plays a severely wise spinster with her usual magnetic minimalism. Kathleen Turner, as a hysterically possessive mother, is an unfocussed sprawl with a distractingly unplaceable accent. Roger Rees, Cynthia Nixon, and Jude Law also star, under the direction of Sean Mathias, in this import from London's Royal National Theatre. (5/15/95) (Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 47th St. 239-6200.)

John & Jen—Andrew Lippa and Tom Greenwald's "musical that grows up before your eyes" spans a forty-year period, starting in 1951, and explores problems of love and family through the relationships of a sister and a brother and, later on, the sister and her son. The book is often hackneyed and the music repetitive, though the lyrics to the songs ("Christmas," "Little League," "Graduation") possess an honest charm. Well staged by Gabriel Barre, and acted with great verve by James Ludwig and Carolee Carmello. Stuart Duke provided the deft lighting. (Lamb's, 130 W. 44th St. 997-1780.)



Sharon Washington and Mary Beth Fisher (top), and Kevin O'Rourke and Oren J. Sofer, in "The Radical Mystique."

GAIL GELTNER

Lady-Like—Laura Shamas's drama about the love affair between Lady Eleanor Butler and Sarah Ponsonby, who fled Ireland in 1778 to live together in Wales. (Grove Street Playhouse, 39 Grove St. 741-6436.)

London Suite—Neil Simon knows how to cater to his audience, but he's serving leftovers: these four one-acts are painfully dated in both their substance and their execution. The main pleasure in this production is Carole Shelley, who provides some much needed comic muscle tone. (Union Square Theatre, 100 E. 17th St. 307-4100.)

Loose Lips—A comedy revue, featuring the National Transcript Players, based on records of spoken blunders by the Prince of Wales, Clarence Thomas, President Clinton, and other public figures. Bebe Neuwirth is guest narrator through June 18. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 799-4599.)

Love! Valour! Compassion!—The eight gay men in Terrence McNally's beautifully written drama connect in ways that almost any nuclear family would envy. Under the nimble direction of Joe Mantello, the actors present humbling evidence of what love is and can be. (11/14/94) (Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 239-6200.)

One Woman Shoe—In this encore production, a collaboration by the brother-sister team of David and Amy Sedaris, social-services applicants can't receive benefits until they put on a one-person show. Ms. Sedaris appears in the cast, along with David Rakoff, Jackie Hoffman, Sarah Thyre, and Jodie Lennon. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 475-7710.)

The Only Thing Worse You Could Have Told Me . . .—Dan Butler offers a procession of characters from the real world of contemporary gay culture, moving seamlessly from one monologue to the next in a one-man show that is by turns hilarious, infuriating, sad, and uplifting—a charmer. (Actors' Playhouse, 100 Seventh Ave. S. 307-4100.)

Party—Seven gay men get together to play a strip version of truth or dare, with terrifically funny (if occasionally didactic) results. The characters in David Dillon's comedy are stereotypes, more or less, but the solid cast makes them believable, and in the end you've had a look at some enduring friendships (and at some nice bodies). (Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 239-4321.)

Prisoner of Love—An adaptation of Jean Genet's last book—a meditation on the fate of the Palestinians—in which Ruth Maleczech, bundled up in black like a babushka, wanders the stage delivering gnomic utterances over Philip Glass's snake-charmer saxophone music. The adaptation is by Maleczech, Chiori Miyagawa, and JoAnne Akalaitis, who also directed; they have packed a lot of opacity into an hour and a quarter. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 302-6989. Closes June 25.)

The Radical Mystique—Arthur Laurents' new play centers on the planning of a Black Panthers fundraiser by two Greenwich Village friends in 1969. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212. Closes July 2.)

Rob Becker's Defending the Caveman—A hundred-minute standup routine. Some of Becker's examples of discontent between the sexes are very funny (a lot of vigorous nodding goes on in the theatre—never by men and women at the same time), but a fair number of them are shopworn. (Helen Hayes, 240 W. 44th St. 307-4100.)

The Rose Tattoo—Tennessee Williams's paean to sexual passion—he called it his "love-play to the world." As the central character, the alternately pious and hot-blooded Serafina, Mercedes Ruehl is funny and affecting, and Anthony LaPaglia brings a sweet openness to the role of the young man who puts the bloom back in her cheeks. Robert Falls directed. (5/15/95) (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 239-6200. Closes July 2.)

Show Boat—Harold Prince's epic-size production of the 1927 Jerome Kern–Oscar Hammerstein II musical. (10/17/94) (Gershwin, 51st St. west of Broadway. 307-4100.)

Simpson Street—Eduardo Gallardo's claustrophobic South Bronx family drama is stuffed with every conceivable cliché. Even Iraida Polanco's vivid performance as a sex-crazed neighbor doesn't make the evening more than intermittently interesting. Saturday and Sunday performances are in Spanish; a lot of the jokes in the English version are in Spanish, too. (Puerto Rican Traveling Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 354-1293. Closes July 2.)

Smokey Joe's Café—The Songs of Leiber and Stoller—A feast of early rock and roll, performed by a cast with Grade A lungs and legs. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 239-6200.)

Soul of an Intruder—Steven Braunstein's psychological thriller, about a woman with a mysterious past. With Patrick Skelton, Jeffrey Spolan, and Darby Townsend. (Miranda, 259 W. 30th St. 875-7772. Closes June 18.)

Spookyworld—A lesbian comedy by Madeleine Olnek, in which a one-night stand—between a poet and a woman who works as a ghost in an amusement-park haunted house—has messy repercussions. The cast includes Babs Davy and Peg Healy. Directed by Deb Margolin. (Wow Café, 59 E. 4th St. 460-8067. Closes June 24.)

Sunset Boulevard—Glenn Close continues her triumphant run as Norma Desmond through July 2; Betty Buckley assumes the role on July 4. (12/5/94) (Minskoff, 45th St. west of Broadway. 307-4007.)

Swingtime Canteen—A re-creation of a 1944 U.S.O. concert, performed in a night club. Extraneous bits of plot threaten to derail the show, but the lovely songs, done with verve and charm, carry the day. (Blue Angel, 321 W. 44th St. 239-6200.)

Sylvia—In A. R. Gurney's new comedy, Sarah Jessica Parker plays a dog named Sylvia (who says there aren't roles for women?). She brings meaning to the life of a middle-aged currency trader (Charles Kimbrough) while driving a canine-shaped wedge between him and his wife (Blythe Danner). Parker has some funny moments: you should hear what she says when she sees a cat, and her attempt to mate with a matronly guest (Derek Smith, in a good drag turn) is hilarious. But this upper-middle-class fairy tale settles too soon into a monotonous sweetness; it lacks bite. John Tillinger directed. (Manhattan Theatre Club, at City Center, 131 W. 55th St. 581-1212.)

Travels with My Aunt—Giles Havergal, directing his own witty adaptation of Graham Greene's novel, has captured the book's amusingly puzzled tone with his playful, inventive (though overlong) staging. Four wildly different actors all play Henry Pulling, the staid retired banker whose eccentric Aunt Augusta drags him into her international adventures. Jim Dale doubles as Aunt Augusta, and the other three skillfully handle some twenty additional parts. (Minetta Lane Theatre, 18 Minetta Lane. 420-8000.)

Twelve Dreams—James Lapine wrote and directed this drama, inspired by a case study from Carl Jung's "Man and His Symbols." (Mitzi E. Newhouse, Lincoln Center. 239-6200.)

Word of Mouth—James Lecesne's remarkably varied solo show: eight characters, eight voices, and (you'd swear) eight bodies. In general, the technique is more startling than the material. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 580-1313.)

LONG RUNS

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST: Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 307-4100. . . . **BLUE MAN GROUP / TUBES:** Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 254-4370. . . . **CATS:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 239-6200. . . . **CRAZY FOR YOU:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **THE FANTASTICKS:** Sullivan Street Playhouse, 181 Sullivan St., at Bleecker St. 674-3838. . . . **GREASE!:** Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 239-6200. . . . **JELLY ROLL!:** Kaufman, 534 W. 42nd St. 307-4100. . . . **KISS OF THE SPIDER WOMAN:** Broadhurst, 235 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **LES MISÉRABLES:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 239-6200. . . . **MISS SAIGON:** Broadway Theatre, Broadway at 53rd St. 239-6200. . . . **PERFECT CRIME:** Duffy, 1553 Broadway, at 46th St. 695-3401. . . . **THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA:** Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 239-6200. . . . **STOMP:** Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at St. Marks Pl. 477-2477. . . . **THREE TALL WOMEN:** Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 239-6200. . . . **TONY N' TINA'S WEDDING:** St. John's Church, 81 Christopher St. 279-4200. . . . **THE WHO'S TOMMY:** St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 239-6200.

DANCE

Intuitive Leaps

EVERY season—football, basketball, volleyball—the television-sports combines liken their products to ballet, treating the public to slow-motion clips set to pas-de-deux music. A rarer thing happens when Damian Woetzel, a principal dancer with the New York City Ballet, takes to the air: choreography assumes the aggressive, edge-of-the-seat chanciness of sports. "I much prefer to go a little further—and maybe I'm not quite sure how it's all going to fall together in the end," the twenty-eight-year-old dancer said recently, discussing his startling leaps. "That would account for that out-of-control look: because I probably am."

Woetzel's assessment is a little disingenuous—it's hard to imagine a dancer of his technical command veering out of control. A ballet student at four and a stage performer at seven, he was a fifteen-year-old company member with the Los Angeles Ballet when Rudolf Nureyev saw him dance and directed him to New York City Ballet's guru of technique, Stanley Williams. Woetzel moved to New York, and the laconic Williams offered him such pointers as "Big toe." ("You'd think, What is he saying? Then you'd realize he was talking about the big toe being the end of the line from the leg; when you take a step you're going toward that big toe.") Whether you watch Woetzel for his technical intuition or for his powerful inventiveness in the air, time is running out: the New York City Ballet season ends next week, on June 25, and Woetzel won't land here again until November.

New York City Ballet—June 14 at 8: "The Goldberg Variations" and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." . . . ¶ June 15 at 8: "Serenade," "Danses de Cour," and "Stars and Stripes." . . . ¶ June 16 at 8: "Adams Violin Concerto," "In G Major," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." . . . ¶ June 17 at 2: "Swan Lake," "Danses de Cour," and "Gershwin Concerto." . . . ¶ June 17 at 8: "Watermill" and "In G Major." . . . ¶ June 18 at 1: "Adams Violin Concerto," "Danses de Cour," and "Tchaikovsky Suite No. 3." . . . ¶ June 18 at 7: "Swan Lake," "Glazunov Pas de Deux," "Sinfonia," and "Gershwin Concerto." . . . ¶ June 20 at 8: "A Midsummer Night's Dream." (New York State Theatre. 870-5570. Through June 25.)

American Ballet Theatre—The company concludes its season with performances of "Don Quixote," on June 14 and June 17 at 2 and 8, and June 15-16 at 8. (Metropolitan Opera House. 362-6000.)

American Ballroom Theatre—The six-couple company ends its engagement with "Tango," "Sheer Romance," and "Rodgers and Hart with Ella." (Joyce Theatre, 175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 242-0800. June 14-16 at 8, June 17 at 2 and 8, and June 18 at 2 and 7:30.)

Kirov Ballet—The St. Petersburg company begins its two-week stay at the Metropolitan Opera House with "Les Saisons Russes," a program of three works by Mikhail Fokine, restaged by his granddaughter Isabelle Fokine and current Kirov principal dancer Andris Liepa. (362-6000. June 19 at 7:30 and June 20 at 8. Through July 1.)

Noche Flamenca—The eight singers, dancers, and musicians from Madrid bring their traditional percussive steps to a venue just down the block from "Stomp." (80 St. Marks Pl. 924-0077. June 14-18 at 8. Through July 2.)

"Minuet in the Box"—Sumie Yonei & Dancers, a Tokyo-based company, uses seventeenth-century French court dance as a way of representing *tamashii*, the Buddhist concept of successive incarnations of the soul. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 924-0077. June 15-17 at 8 and June 18 at 3.)

Shapiro & Smith Dance—Choreographers Danial Shapiro and Joanie Smith perform with their five-member company in two revivals—"George and Betty's House" and "Dance with Two Army Blankets"—and in the première of "Falling Into Light," a response, in part, to recent events in Bosnia and Rwanda, created in collaboration with playwright David Greenspan and composer Scott Killian. Shapiro, who also drew on family memories awakened by a visit to the Holocaust Museum, warns, "It's not a pretty piece. There's some beauty in it, but it's a terrible beauty." (Tisch School of the Arts, 111 Second Ave., at 6th St., fifth floor. 924-0077. June 14-15 at 8.)

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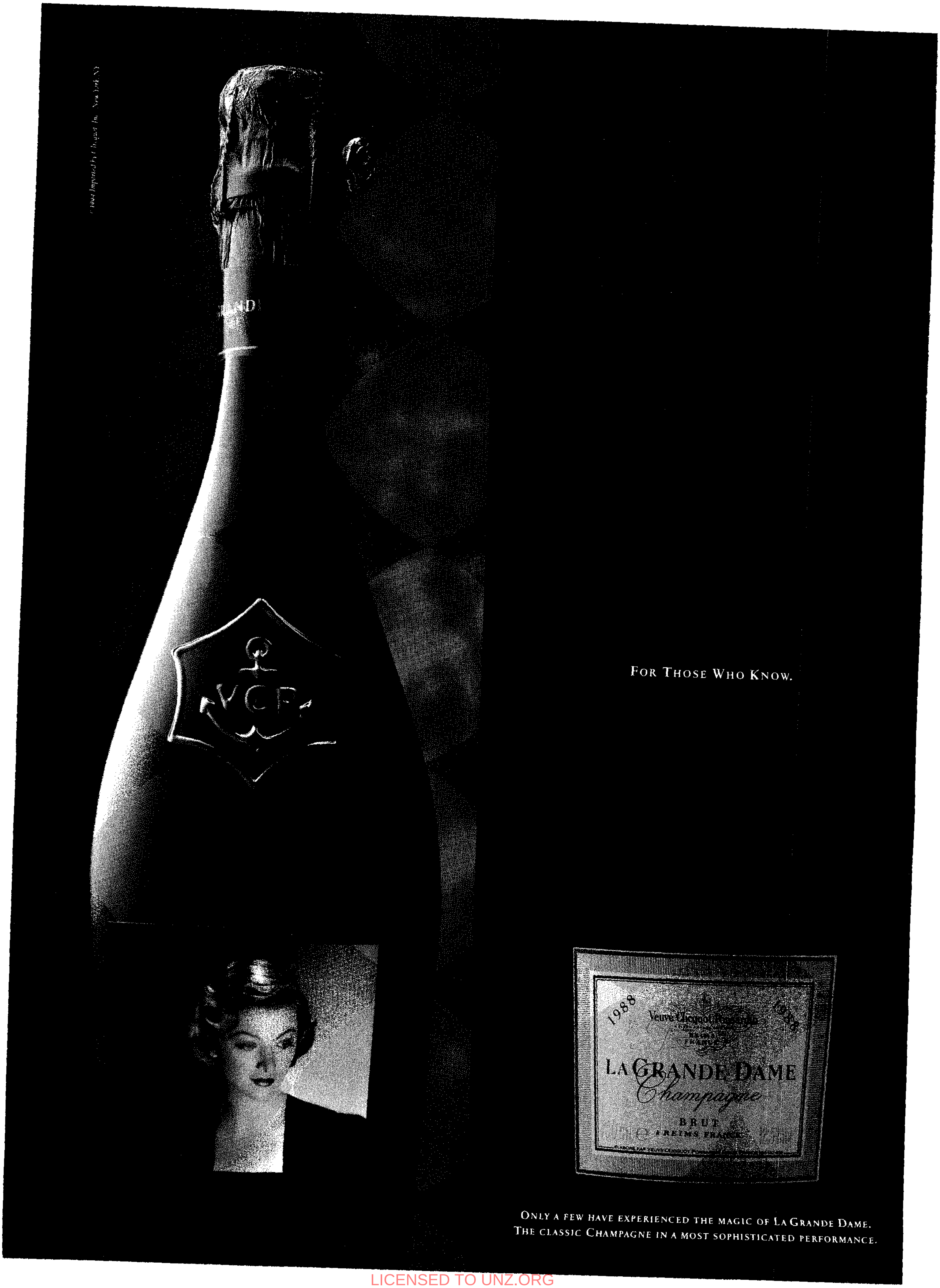

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NIGHT LIFE

New Blood

CONNIE KAY, the quietly brilliant drummer, died last winter, after nearly forty years with the Modern Jazz Quartet. His approach was elusive and subtle, but his relentless swing gave the band its heartbeat. Poised behind vibraharpist Milt Jackson, pianist John Lewis, and bassist Percy Heath, Kay was the quintessential foot soldier: he wasn't flashy, just perfect.

There has never been an ensemble quite like the M.J.Q. Their blend of gutbucket soloing and formal elegance was inimitable, and Kay's death seemed like an insurmountable disaster. But Jackson, Lewis, and Heath have decided to carry on, and you can catch them this week at the Blue Note, where they begin a six-night run on June 20. Kay's replacement is Albert (Tootie) Heath—the bassist's brother. He has a gorgeous touch and a Kayesque ability to swing at low volume. Albert and Percy play together in their own band (the Heath Brothers, natch), and their practiced groove is a wonder. A band's calibration is always a tricky matter, especially in an airtight vessel like the M.J.Q., but with luck and a little brotherly love, the M.J.Q. may still have a long way to travel.

CONCERTS

CHARLES AZNAVOUR—The Gallic suavester. (Carnegie Hall. 247-7800. June 14-16 at 8 and June 17 at 3 and 8.)

BUCKSHOT LEFONQUE—Branford Marsalis's acid-jazz combo. (Central Park SummerStage, Rumsey Playfield, mid-park at 72nd St. June 14 at 7.)

"II JOHNS"—John Lurie, best known as the hatchet-faced leader of the Lounge Lizards, faces off against another jazz instigator, John Zorn. Lurie performs with his National Orchestra, which turns out to be two percussionists. Zorn appears with Masada, his klezmer outfit. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 840-2824. June 15 at 8.)

SPANISH FLY—A trio, featuring the amazing slide guitarist Dave Tronzo. (Whitney Museum, Madison Ave. at 75th St. June 16 at 6:30.)

EARTH, WIND & FIRE—Guiding light Maurice White and his trusty kalimba are sitting this tour out, but the group that made stadiums safe for R. & B. still has a hefty songbook and enough pyrotechnics to get their fans in the mood. Through all the smoke and pyramids wafts the immaculate falsetto of Philip Bailey, who, after some twenty-five years, is still eminently capable of transporting anyone to Boogie Wonderland. (Jones Beach Theatre. 1-516 221-1000. June 16 at 8.)

MELISSA ETHERIDGE—While the raspy-voiced singer's Bryan Adams approach is hardly cutting-edge, her latest album, "Yes I Am," is probably her best. She does her arena-rousing thing with verve and conviction, giving boys and girls alike a reason to shout. (Meadowlands Arena. 1-201 935-3900. June 16 at 8.)

GEORGE WINSTON—An evening of piano noodling. (Avery Fisher Hall. 875-5030. June 16 at 8.)

G LOVE & SPECIAL SAUCE—This dynamite trio from Philadelphia plays amazingly loose and swinging rap songs—funky odes to John Lee Hooker, hoops, beer, and other low-down pleasures. Vocalist-guitarist G Love has molded a distinctive combination of chicken-shack hip-hop grooves and bluesy riffs in a rap market crowded with busy, overproduced gangsta records. With Solomon Burke and the Uptown Horns. (Central Park SummerStage. June 17 at 3.)

JOHN DENVER—Back in the seventies, when the Eagles were snorting their way down the fast lane, Denver was getting high on Rocky Mountain air and the sunshine on his shoulders. Since practically all the performers from that era have cleaned up their acts and focussed their attention on the rain forest, the return of John Henry Deutschendorf, Jr., doesn't seem so out of the blue. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 247-4777. June 17 at 8.)

HOOTIE & THE BLOWFISH—Only time will tell whether this earnest South Carolina quartet will be this year's Counting Crows or next year's Spin Doctors. One thing's for sure: Darius Rucker and crew have their folk-rock references down cold: their No. 1 album, "Cracked View Mirror," includes a sha-la-la chorus that could have come right off Van Morrison's "Brown-Eyed Girl." As they say—back to the future. (Jones Beach Theatre. June 17 at 8.)

GOSPELFEST—With Helen Baylor, the Jenkins Brothers, and other roof-raising combos. (Avery Fisher Hall. June 17 at 8.)

GILBERTO GIL—The samba star, with Brazilian bandleaders Chico Science and Nação Zumbi. (Central Park SummerStage. June 18 at 3.)

GRATEFUL DEAD / BOB DYLAN—A Dead concert is an institution old enough and American enough to warrant an exhibit in the Smithsonian. It's a modern-day Chautauqua, a portable Mardi Gras, a temporary Hooverville where any evening of the week can be the weirdest Saturday night of your life. Each show is a gamble, though—will the music lift off toward ecstasy, or meander through a swamp of repetition? / Having explored two of the world's great religions, Dylan recently checked into cyberspace; his landmark "Highway 61 Revisited" can now be purchased on CD-ROM, as "Highway 61 Interactive." (Giants Stadium, the Meadowlands. June 18 at 6 and June 19 at 7.)

LUTHER VANDROSS—There's no doubt that he's a great singer, but his taste has always been suspect; his new record, "Songs," sounds like happy hour at the Holiday Inn. To hear him wrap his hot larynx around cold leftovers like "Killing Me Softly," "Endless Love," and "The Impossible Dream" is to wonder, Why, Luther, why? (Jones Beach Theatre. June 18 at 8.)

HERMAN VAN VEEN—The Dutch pop star. (Kaye Playhouse, Hunter College, Park Ave. at 68th St. 772-4448. June 19 at 8.)

ROCK, ETC.

(A highly arbitrary listing, in which boldface type indicates some of the more notable performers in town. Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it is advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.)

BAR D'O, 29 Bedford St. (627-1580)—Low sofas, moderne ottomans, and venetian blinds make this mirrored living room the perfect spot for late-night love (keep in mind that the joint is named after Pauline Réage's heroine); burnt-orange illumination helps you negotiate your impeccable cocktail. Most nights, the music is up-to-the-minute seventies, but Tuesdays and Sundays gender channeller **JOEY ARIAS** sets the ceiling fans awhirl.

BOTTOM LINE, 15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (228-6300)—June 16: **ANNIE HASLAM**, the former singer for the English art-rock band Renaissance. June 19: **ED PALERMO** and his sixteen-piece band play the music of Frank Zappa. June 20: An evening of music and comedy with **HARVEY FIERSTEIN**.

CAFÉ SIN-É, 122 St. Marks Pl. (982-0370)—The **NEW ORIGINALS** entertain on June 17.

CBGB & OMFUG, 315 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (982-4052)—A narrow, graffiti-strewn cave packed every evening with new and used bands. June 16: **MULE**. . . . ¶ Next door, the neat and comfortable testament to gen-

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1988
LA GRANDE DAME

AIR FRANCE

trification called CB's Gallery plays host to EDNASWAP, on June 16.

Chicago B.L.U.E.S., 73 Eighth Ave., at 13th St. (924-9755)—June 16-17: Singer OTIS CLAY.

The Cooler, 416 W. 14th St. (229-0785)—A lavender and stainless-steel vault deep in the heart of the meat district. Tuesday nights are given over to experimental d.j. spinoffs.

Continental Divide, 25 Third Ave., at St. Marks Pl. (529-6924)—Hipsters, punks, poseurs, N.Y.U. students, the occasional skinhead—a typical East Village bar. Live music nightly.

Don Hill's, 511 Greenwich St. (219-2850)—A tidy little SoHo bar with an above-average P.A. system and topnotch local bands on the docket. Friday night is Squeeze Box, a vinyl-and-velvet gay glamfest, hosted by Mistress Formika.

Duplex, 61 Christopher St., at Seventh Ave. (255-5438)—Everyone is a star here—the pianist, the bartender, the waiters, and the audience. The fabulous DRESSING ROOM DIVAS entertain every Friday night.

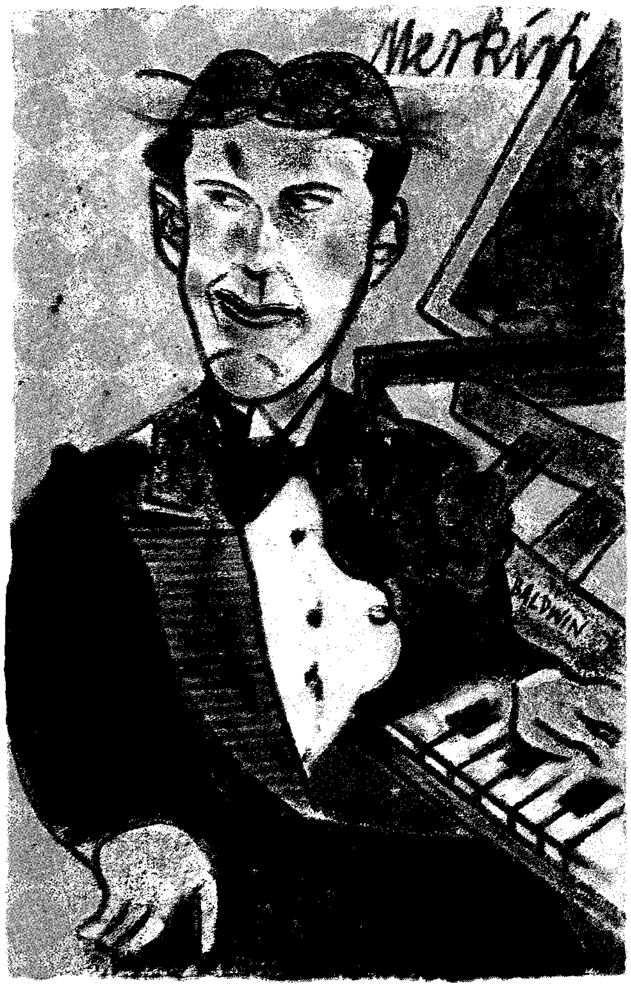
Fez, *380 Lafayette St. (533-7000)*—June 17-18: SUSAN MC KEOWN & CHANTING HOUSE. June 19-20: The Loser's Lounge salutes the Beach Boys' resident genius-nut, Brian Wilson. The MINGUS BIG BAND still packs them in every Thursday. Dining.

Flannery's, 205 W. 14th St. (929-9589)—A well-scrubbed, amiable Irish pub with many of the classic features (pints of Guinness, non-stop TV sports) and a few of the near-classics (a CD jukebox, a portrait of Elvis).

Irving Plaza, 17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (777-6800)—June 15: MUDHONEY. Back when Nirvana and Pearl Jam were spreading the Seattle gospel, purists cited Mudhoney as its true originator. Unlike its notable neighbors, the band never aspired to classic-rock permanence, cleaving instead to a garage ethos that was undeniably grungy. While Kurt Cobain transformed "Rape Me" into an achy, cosmic refrain, Mudhoney coined anti-anthems like "Touch Me I'm Sick." The happy sentiments continue on "My Brother the Cow," a healthy antidote to the current wave of Seattle simulacra. June 16: From Zaire, PAPA WEMBA. Western artists like Peter Gabriel and Paul Simon have been criticized for ripping off African musicians, but the truth is that the arrangement is reciprocal: Western pop has been infiltrating Africa for years. Wemba is perhaps the most Westernized of African pop stars (his new record, "Emotion," was produced by Stephen Hague, who also works with the Pet Shop Boys), which means that his music is slightly more accessible than that of, say, Baaba Maal or Salif Keita—but it's just as exciting. June 17: The JON SPENCER BLUES EXPLOSION. It's hard not to love a record that begins with someone shrieking "Bell-bottoms!" and that's what happens on "Orange," the latest CD from this savage trio. The Explosion devotes a great deal of time and energy to the enduring mysteries of the blues, injecting the idiom with ragged nineties-style references: tin-can drums, a string section, and, here and there, a blast of head-butting distortion. The band spends more than three hundred days a year on tour (they're currently on the road with the Beastie Boys), and Spencer sure knows enough swampy, greasy-spoon guitar to conjure up an original blend of Isaac Hayes, Howlin' Wolf, and the psychobilly hero Hasil Adkins. . . . ¶ Soul Kitchen, the original seventies funk and R. & B. party, goes down (late) every Tuesday. . . . ¶ The Swing Dance Society gathers here every Sunday. The dancers share a passion for the Lindy Hop, a *dance that involves a lot of whirling and the* occasional display of underwear. Sets from eight until midnight. For information on the society, call 696-9737.

Kaptain Banana, 101 Greene St. (343-9000)—French cabaret *en travesti* in SoHo. Three drag queens and eight dancers re-create the Court of Versailles, a carnival in Rio, Marlene Dietrich, and the Andrews Sisters. There's also a singing gorilla. Dining.

Limelight, Sixth Ave. at 20th St. (807-7850)—The rock-and-roll church. Wednesday night is Disco 2000, a fin-de-siècle blowout.



Steve Ross, at the Algonquin.

RICHARD MERKIN

Ludlow Street Café, 165 Ludlow St. (353-0536)—A modest below-stairs room that looks like a spruced-up tenement apartment. Mondays belong to BEAT RODEO, a straight-shooting bar band that plays a mixture of country, blues, Dylan, Byrds, Velvets, and various pop curiosities.

Maxwell's, 1039 Washington St., Hoboken (1-201 798-4064)—Romance awaits! Meet your date at the World Trade Center and hold hands on the PATH as it burrows its way under the Hudson to Hoboken, the burg that gave the world baseball and Ol' Blue Eyes. June 17: KEVIN SALEM.

Mercury Lounge, 217 E. Houston St. (260-4700)—June 15-16: Irish rocker KATEL KEINIG. June 20: MOXY FRUVOUS.

Nell's, 246 W. 14th St. (675-1567)—A Victorian-style club, home to an eclectic crowd of downtown youngsters dancing to throbbing funk and techno-pop. Monday night is Funky Buddha, with live bands and d.j. Derek Corley "on the wheels."

Paddy Reilly's Music Bar, 519 Second Ave., at 29th St. (686-1210)—BLACK 47 usually plays on Saturdays, and Speir Mor (Gaelic for Big Sky) performs for a hearty following on Fridays. Séisiún—a traditional Irish jam—is on Thursday nights.

Les Poulets, 16 W. 22nd St. (229-2000)—The *name may be French, but the music here is* Latin: expect salsa, merengue, and the occasional cha-cha. Dining.

Rodeo Bar, 375 Third Ave., at 27th St. (683-6500)—Sunday evenings belong to the FLYING NEUTRINOS, a New Orleans jazz band led by cousins Ingrid Lucia and Todd Lundagin. Lucia's lowdown singing, sassy patter, and mischievous grin are a lot like Billie Holiday's; Lundagin plays trombone, tap-dances, and has a disarming Chet Baker-style voice.

Webster Hall, 125 E. 11th St. (353-1600)—A byzantine disco wonderland with four floors, a coffee shop, and a wig boutique. Wednesday is drag night. Psychedelic Thursdays feature grunge acts and cheap beer.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. (840-6800)—Through late June: STEVE ROSS sings the lyrics of Hammerstein and Hart. Dining.

Arthur's Tavern, 57 Grove St. (675-6879)—Mondays belong to the Grove Street Stompers, Tuesdays through Thursdays to Al Bundy and Johnny Parker, Fridays and Saturdays to the Freddy Francis trio, and Sundays to Lee Lorenz and the Creole Cookin' Jazz Band.

Blue Note, 131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (475-8592)—This blue-on-blue club is an institution and knows it: how many other clubs sell their own belt buckles? Through June 18: vocalist RACHELLE FERRELL. The legendary MODERN JAZZ QUARTET takes over on June 20. Dining.

Bradley's, 70 University Pl., at 11th St. (228-6440)—A duskily lit neighborhood bar, where pianists, bassists, and, occasionally, drummers compete for your ear. Truth and beauty usually prevail. Through June 17: guitar, piano, and bass with ATTILA ZOLLER, LARRY WILLIS, and SANTI DEBRIANO. Dining.

Cajun, 129 Eighth Ave., at 16th St. *(691-6174)—A New Orleans-style res*taurant specializing in Dixieland and swing. On Fridays, catch the Canal Street Dixieland Jazz and Blues band. Saturdays belong to the New Atlantic Jazz band.

Carlyle Hotel, Madison Ave. at 76th St. (744-1600)—The Café Carlyle, a snug, windowless enclave in the doorman district, features discreet waiters, wraparound pastel murals, and, through June, the great BOBBY SHORT. Time has not diminished the tasteful virtuosity of Short's ivory-tinkling, nor has it taken the edge off his gregarious wit as a singer and showman. A fixture at the Carlyle, he can still spin an Ira Gershwin lyric with all the sophistication, humor, and pathos it deserves. Also well served are gems by Duke Ellington, Dorothy Fields, Irving Berlin, and, of course, Cole Porter. A de-lightful, de-lovely evening. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in Bemelmans Bar, BARBARA CARROLL is in attendance.

Fat Tuesday's, 190 Third Ave., at 17th St. *(533-7900)—Through June 18: the propul*sive pianist JUNIOR MANCE. On Mondays, guitarist-inventor LES PAUL leads a trio. Dining.

Fifty Seven Fifty Seven, 57 E. 57th St. (758-5757)—A sleek piano-and-bass room in the Four Seasons Hotel. Thursdays through Sundays, DONALD JOHNSTON is the featured pianist; on Fridays and Saturdays he performs with a trio. Dining.

Five Spot, 4 W. 31st St. (631-0100)—June 16-17: Saxman ERIC PERSON. Dining.

Iridium, 44 W. 63rd St. (582-2121)—Across the *street from Lincoln Center, this restaurant and* club features a handsome bar upstairs and a surreal performance space downstairs. The BENNY CARTER quartet settles in on June 20. Dining.

Knickerbocker, 33 University Pl., at 9th St. (228-8490)—An Old New York kind of place, with dark wood panelling, white tablecloths, and brass figurine lamps. June 14-17: Piano and bass with **CAROL BRITTO** and **GARY MAZZAROPPI.**

Knitting Factory, 74 Leonard St., between Broadway and Church St. (219-3055)—God bless the Knitting Factory. The JVC Jazz Festival may be getting tamer every year, but the Knit's wacky "What Is Jazz?" festival remains as multifarious and contradictory as ever. The hoedown gets underway on June 19 and runs through July 1. This week's highlights include trumpeter **DAVE DOUGLAS** and the **JAZZ PASSENGERS** (June 19), with the minimalist trio **BABKAS** in the Old Knit, at 47 East Houston St. June 20: Solo piano with the celestial **CECIL TAYLOR.** For a long time, no one paid much attention to Taylor. He was a freak who played the way that Bartók or Hindemith might have played had they been jazz musicians. But masters often need to have their way prepared, and that is what McCoy Tyner and Keith Jarrett have been doing—knowingly or not—for the past few decades. Once in a while Taylor opens up enough to reveal his roots, and you can hear traces of Ellington, Gershwin, and Monk.

Metronome, 915 Broadway, at 21st St. (505-7400)—In the shadow of the Flatiron Building, a cavernous, elegant restaurant that features live music every weekend.

Metropolis, 31 Union Sq. W. (675-2300)—A swank basement club, home to fine jazz combos. June 16-17: The **MIKE CLARK** quartet, with Dave Liebman. Tuesdays are given over to the **GEORGE GEE ORCHESTRA,** a seventeen-piece swing band.

Michael's Pub, 211 E. 55th St. (758-2272)—On Mondays, Woody Allen continues his night job as clarinet player in the **NEW ORLEANS FUNERAL AND RAGTIME ORCHESTRA,** a Dixieland-jazz ensemble. Closed Sundays.

Rainbow & Stars, 30 Rockefeller Plaza (632-5000)—The great cabaret in the sky. Vocalist **PHYLICIA RASHAD** is the current star in residence. . . . ¶ Across the hall, in the Rainbow Room, there's a revolving dance floor, plus swinging big-band music courtesy of the Rainbow Room Orchestra, featuring vocalists Michael Andrew and Claudette Sierra. Closed Mondays.

Red Blazer Too, 349 W. 46th St. (262-3112)—Thursdays belong to Stan Rubin's big band, Fridays to Lew Anderson's big band and Sam Ulano and the Bourbon Street Swingers, and Saturdays to Bob Cantwell and his Stompers.

Smalls, 183 W. 10th St. (929-7565)—This aptly named club features up-and-coming players jamming late into the night.

Sweet Basil, 88 Seventh Ave. S., at Bleecker St. (242-1785)—A convivial and crowded jazz club where the musicians are always top-shelf. An electrified big band belonging to trumpeter **MILES EVANS** is in action on Mondays. Dining.

Tavern on the Green, Central Park W. at 67th St. (873-3200)—The Chestnut Room may resemble a hunting lodge decorated by Liberace, but the performances here are no joke. Through June 18: the **ALLAN HARRIS** quartet. Dining.

Village Vanguard, 178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (255-4037)—The behemoths of the tenor sax—Don Byas, Gene Ammons, David Murray—hover above **JAMES CARTER** (in through June 17), whispering their secrets in his ear. A gifted eclectic, Carter also takes on soprano and alto sax, the bass clarinet, and the flute. He's still sorting through his influences, but his work screams confidence. Great things are expected. Vocalist **HERB JEFFRIES** (June 18-19), a.k.a. the Bronze Buckaroo, has played a singing cowboy in black Westerns, had a hit with Duke Ellington ("Flamingo," in 1940), and, at eighty-three, is about to release a new record. Now that's a career. The **VANGUARD JAZZ ORCHESTRA** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

Metropolitan Museum, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St.—"Art and Empire: Treasures from Assyria in the British Museum." The booty from Austen Henry Layard's spectacular excavations at Nineveh and Nimrud in the eighteen-forties landed in the British Museum, and for the most part it remained there until this splendid loan exhibition. A series of superbly rendered low-relief stone carvings possess Homeric narrative power and irresistible charm; in one, which shows soldiers swimming across the Euphrates to escape Assyrian archers, the trees on the bank are as vivid as Matisse cutouts. The freshest, most beautiful piece is a small ivory panel inlaid with gold, lapis lazuli, and carnelian, which depicts a man being devoured by a lion. A room devoted to Layard himself contains some Mesopotamian jewelry that the archeologist gave his wife, and it's as illuminating about the Victorians as the great carvings are about the Assyrians. A small companion exhibit, "Assyrian Origins," displays early objects from the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, in Berlin. Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ An exhibition of work by the French photographer Nadar (1820-1910). Through July 9. . . . ¶ A display of more than a hundred painted-glass roundels produced in the European Lowlands between 1480 and 1560. Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ "The Seven Deadly Sins," a suite of paintings by Paul Cadmus, is at the center of a small show of his works (another of which is "The Eighth Sin: Jealousy"). Through Aug. 13. . . . ¶ "An Egyptian Bestiary," a large non-petting zoo of falcons, baboons, hippos, and ibis, in stone, ivory, gold, bronze, and wood. . . . **NOTE:** The museum's roof garden is open, when weather permits. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:15, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Museum of Modern Art, 11 W. 53rd St.—Ceramic razor blades, a carbon-fiber airplane, and titanium eyeglass frames are a few of the more than two hundred objects in "Mutant Materials in Contemporary Design." Through Aug. 27. . . . ¶ The latest in the "projects" series is a video work and an installation by the performance artist Paul McCarthy. Through July 18. . . . ¶ "Masterworks from the Louise Reinhardt Smith Collection," thirty-six paintings, drawings, and sculptures by, among others, Kandinsky, Picasso, Monet, Seurat, Braque, Degas, and Moore. Through Aug. 22. . . . ¶ "Helen Chadwick: Bad Blooms." Large, round photographs of flowers suspended in different substances (dandelions in hair gel, narcissi in bath bubbles, bluebells in oil and milk). Through July 11. (Open Saturdays through Tuesdays, 11 to 6; Thursdays and Fridays, noon to 8:30.)

Guggenheim Museum, Fifth Ave. at 89th St.—A large survey of paintings by the German Neo-Expressionist Georg Baselitz. . . . ¶ "Josef Albers: Glass, Color, and Light," a show of paintings on glass, glass constructions, oil paintings, and rarely exhibited photographs. (Open Sundays through Wednesdays, 10 to 6; Fridays and Saturdays, 10 to 8.)

Guggenheim Museum SoHo, 575 Broadway—A survey of Gary Hill's œuvre, in which room after darkened room offers video works of technical finesse and strange, even ravishing beauty. In "Searchlight," a motorized cylinder, which beams an image of an ocean horizon onto the opposite wall, slowly moves from side to side; as the projector approaches the limit of its range, the circular image stretches into a ghostly ellipse, with the sound of waves providing a mournful counterpoint. Through Aug. 20. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6, and Saturday evenings until 8.)

Whitney Museum of American Art, Madison Ave. at 75th St.—The 1995 Whitney Biennial. The third and fourth floors have closed; the second floor and lobby gallery are open through June 25. (Open Wednesdays, Saturdays, and Sundays, 11 to 6; Thursdays, 1 to 8, with no admission charge after 6; Fridays, 11 to 9, with no admission charge after 6 and live music and performances in the lower gallery.)

American Museum of Natural History, Central Park W. at 79th St.—Guess who's back? Some one hundred saurischian and ornithischian dinosaurs. That means a cleaned and repositioned *Tyrannosaurus rex,* an apatosaurus with a new skull and neck bones, and many other specimens, eighty-five per cent of which are real fossils (as opposed to casts). (Open daily, 10 to 5:45, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 8:45.)

Brooklyn Museum, Eastern Parkway—"The Pictographs of Adolph Gottlieb," a series of sixty gridded paintings with Native American, Freudian, Joycean, and other imagery, in free-associative compositions. Through Aug. 27. . . . ¶ The museum has impressively reinstalled its African holdings. The art works and artifacts span a millennium and encompass scores of cultures. Much is beautiful, and much is familiar, but it's the weirder stuff that really catches the eye—for example, a gilt "linguist staff" from Ghana. . . . ¶ "A Graphic Odyssey: Romare Bearden as Printmaker." Through July 9. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

Asia Society, Park Ave. at 70th St.—Monkeys acting like humans, monkeys in their natural state, and monkeys as divine figures: these images grace sculptures, prints, and objects from India, Southeast Asia, Tibet, China, and Japan in a show called. . . "Monkey.". . . ¶ "New Finds, Old Treasures: Early Chinese Ceramics from the Meiyintang Collection." Through June 18. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8; Sundays, noon to 5.)

China Institute, 125 E. 65th St.—Manchu invasions and imperial infighting in the mid-seventeenth century forced potters in the major cities of southern China to search out new patrons. Luckily, the scholar-gentry and merchant classes of the region were wealthy enough and eager enough to step in. "Chinese Porcelains of the Seventeenth Century: Landscapes, Scholars' Motifs, and Narratives" illustrates the resulting shift in style and design, with sixty vases, brush pots, jars, and bowls. Through Aug. 5. (Open Mondays through Saturdays, 10 to 5, and Tuesday evenings until 8; Sundays, 1 to 5.)

Dia Center for the Arts, 548 W. 22nd St.—Gerhard Richter's "Atlas," more than six hundred large panels mounted with thousands of photographs. For upward of thirty years, the German painter has been amassing both archival material (including images of Hitler and of concentration-camp survivors, as well as postcards and pornography) and his own snapshots as sources for his art. For nearly as long he's been organizing these thousands of pictures on panels. Richter has always toyed with the interplay between photography and painting; this strange, obsessive, ongoing art project provides valuable insights into the methods and themes of one of the most influential and enigmatic artists of the postwar era. Through June 25; reopens Sept. 14. . . . ¶ "Worlds Envisioned: Alighiero e Boetti and Frédéric Bruly Bouabré." Through June 25. . . . ¶ "Andy Warhol: The Last Supper Paintings." Done just before Warhol died in 1987, this series includes "Sixty Last Suppers," a huge silk-screen multiple in classic Warhol style, and another huge canvas in which bits and pieces of the Leonardo fresco have been copied (with the aid of a projector) and then painted in flat patches of color, like a paint-by-numbers picture. Through June 25. . . . ¶ "Rest," by Franz West, an installation of twenty-seven couches on the center's roof. Through June 25. (Open Thursdays through Sundays, noon to 6.)

New-York Historical Society, 2 W. 77th St., at Central Park W.—In "Treasury of the Past," an object or a set of objects representing each year from 1750 to 1950 is on view. . . . ¶ "On the Avenue, Fifth Avenue" offers a promenade, via prints, photographs, maps, and other objects, past the mansions, stores, hotels, parks, and churches that thrived along that thoroughfare from the 1840s to the 1920s. . . . ¶ As part of the Public Art Fund's "Lost: New York Projects," the installation artist Christian Boltanski has created "Inventory," a display of the belongings of an anonymous contemporary New Yorker. (Open Wednesdays through Sundays, noon to 5, and Wednesday evenings until 8.)

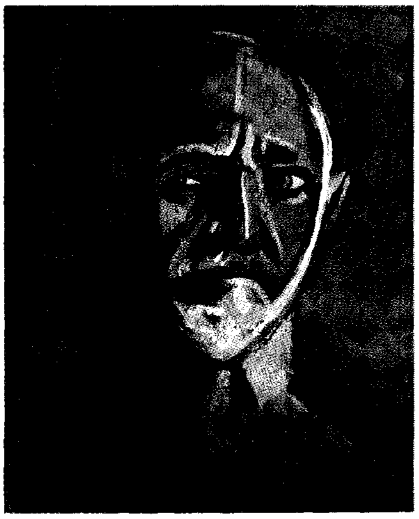
New York Public Library, Fifth Ave. at 42nd St.—"What Price Freedom" features twenty objects, from a Jefferson draft of the Declaration of Independence to a student handbill distributed in Tiananmen Square. (Gottesman Exhibition Hall.) . . . ¶ Part one of "The Collecting Adventure, 1895-1995" examines the way the library has documented and preserved avant-garde and pop culture. (Salomon Room.) . . . ¶ The librarians have chosen a hundred and fifty books, ranging from rare editions to dog-eared paperbacks, as the "Books of the Century." (Third Floor Gallery.) (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Tuesdays and Wednesdays, 11 to 6.)

Parrish Art Museum, 25 Job's Lane, Southampton—"Things in Place: Landscapes and Still-Lifes by Sheridan Lord," the first large one-man exhibition of the South Fork painter, who died last July. Through July 9. (Open Mondays, and Thursdays through Saturdays, 11 to 5; Sundays, 1 to 5. For more information, call 1-516 283-2118.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

(Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.)

Ray Johnson (1927-95)—A memorial exhibition for the artist, who committed suicide in January, that features many of his collages (including early, proto-Pop examples), documentations of conceptual performances (which he called "nothings"), and pieces of "mail art"—thousands of business envelopes containing collages and photocopies related in cryptic ways to their recipients and meant to be added to and sent on to someone else or returned to the artist. Through June 16. (Feigen, 49 E. 68th St.)



Malcolm Morley, at Boone.

Picasso[3]—Three shows provide a feast for the Picassophile. At Pace Wildenstein, 32 E. 57th St.: "Picasso and Drawing," a magnificent exhibition that spans more than sixty years of the master's drawings, from tentative student work to the concupiscent fantasies of old age. A powerful, masklike charcoal from 1907 comes out of his first flirtation with African images; in an early Cubist collage, a figure is deftly delineated in ink, pencil, and bits of wallpaper. A number of paintings are also included, among them a large monochrome oil sketch for the famous, sentimental "Portrait of Mme. Picasso," which shows the subject holding a child in her lap. A group of David Douglas Duncan's photographs of Picasso in his studio accompanies the exhibit. Through June 17. . . . ¶ At Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.: "Works from the Rue des Grands-Augustins Studio, 1939-47," several paintings and works on paper—still-lifes and portraits of women—executed in the artist's capacious quarters in a fourteenth-century palace in Paris. The predominantly gray palette may reflect the gloom of the early war years; it also points, inescapably, toward the grisaille of "Guernica." The most unusual painting is "Composition et Volumes" of 1945, whose swelling and receding forms suggest that Picasso may have had an eye on Giacometti's Surrealist sculptures of the previous decade. Through June 24. . . . ¶ At Krugier, 41 E. 57th St.: "Sketchbooks 1900-1905," including studies for "The Absinthe Drinker" as well as for children playing and dance-hall girls, along with large drawings from the same period. Through June 17.

Kurt Schwitters (1887-1948)—Late paintings, assemblages, and collages by the great German Dadaist. On the evidence of this show, painting was not Schwitters' forte; a few of the works here suggest the generic abstractions that hung in the background in Jacques Tati's sendup of Modernism, "Mon Oncle." The collages and some of the assemblages, though, recall the wit, delicacy, and formal grace of Schwitters' finest work of the twenties. Through June 30. (Werner, 21 E. 67th St. Open Mondays; closed Saturdays.)

"Works on Paper"—A largely first-rate show, including, among the more unpredictable offerings, a splendid graphite abstraction by the eccentric Myron Stout and a marvellously ugly "Fingerpainting" by the suave German ironist Gerhard Richter. Through June 24. (Marks, 1018 Madison Ave., at 79th St.)

Short List—**LEONARD BASKIN,** Midtown-Payson, 745 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through June 23. . . . **ELENA CLIMENT,** Martin, 23 E. 73rd St. Through June 23. . . . **GEORGIA O'KEEFFE,** Peters, 177 E. 78th St. Open Mondays; through June 17. . . . **EPHRAIM RUBENSTEIN,** De Nagy, 41 W. 57th St. Through June 17. . . . **JOAQUIN TORRES-GARCIA,** CDS Gallery, 76 E. 79th St. Through June 24. . . . **JOHN WALKER,** Knoedler, 19 E. 70th St. Through June 30.

GALLERIES—DOWNTOWN

Malcolm Morley—Recent oils. The British-born painter has always been a bit of an iconoclast: his eccentric canvases flirt with Pop and Photo-Realism but remain obdurate hybrids. The new pictures recall, in fantasy form, his wartime childhood in London; in certain works, small models much like the ones he built as a child jut from the surfaces. Through June 24. (Boone, 417 West Broadway.)

Francis Picabia (1879-1953) / **Luc Tuymans**—Picabia's late works are seldom exhibited, but they are frequently invoked in discussions of contemporary parody and pastiche. An undeniable influence on many contemporary painters, from David Salle to John Currin, these self-consciously bad pictures—buxom babes rendered in a flat, sign-painterish style, or lumpy, ridiculously ugly abstractions—are nowadays more revered and more fiercely debated than the early, great works you can see at MOMA. David Zwirner has done us a service in pairing seven of these eccentric canvases with recent paintings by Tuymans, a Belgian artist whose ghostly, awkward, resolutely antiheroic images provide a nice foil to the Dadaist's late work. Through June 17. (Zwirner, 43 Greene St.)

Rirkrit Tiravanija—In the early seventies, Michael Asher sought to lay bare the institutional apparatus of the gallery by simply exhibiting its empty space; the staff went about its business, seemingly unaware that its business had become the show. Tiravanija has been attempting to loosen up Asher's stern conceptual program. In "Untitled, 1995 (Still)"—which both resumes and alters his last show here, two and a half years ago—the front gallery remains empty, while the rear gallery has been turned into a makeshift kitchen where the artist prepares Thai curries for the curious and/or hungry. The modest office space has been taken over by a display of touristy snapshots of foreign lands, and the influx of visitors into this usually private precinct must be a strain on even the most patient gallery assistant's nerves. Through July 1. (303 Gallery, 89 Greene St.)

"Summer Fling"—As the art season winds down, group shows that are often little more than filler start to take over. This summer Stefano Basilico is trying to up the ante by asking his gallery's artists to select partners from outside the gallery for weeklong projects. One artist has to set up a show before the gallery opens for business on Tuesday; the other then has forty-eight hours to respond to the exhibition in any way he or she sees fit. The idea could lead to some smart fun during the summer doldrums. Through July 28. (Basilico Fine Arts, 26 Wooster St.)

Short List—**BARBARA BLOOM,** Castelli, 420 West Broadway. Through June 30. . . . **MARY HAMBLETON,** Auchincloss, 558 Broadway. Through June 24. . . . **BRYAN HUNT,** Gagosian, 136 Wooster St. Through July 15. . . . **BARRY LE VA,** Sonnabend, 420 West Broadway. Through July 28. . . . **LEONE & MACDONALD,** Fawbush, 76 Grand St. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through June 30. . . . **CLAIRE PENTECOST,** American Fine Arts, 22 Wooster St. Through June 24. . . . **JULIAN SCHNABEL,** Shafrazi, 119 Wooster St. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through July 14. . . . **LINCOLN TOBIER,** Hearn, 530 W. 22nd St. Open Wednesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6; through June 25. . . . **FRED TOMASELLI,** Tilton, 611 Broadway. Through June 24. . . . **YUKINORI YANAGI,** Blum, 99 Wooster St. Through July 31. . . . **HEIMO ZOBERING,** Rosen, 130 Prince St. Through July 1.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

Sotheby's—June 17: Gadzooks! An eight-hundred-lot auction of comic books and related collectibles offers the opportunity to bid on that 1942 Radio Orphan Annie Altascope Premium Ring you've been coveting. . . . ¶ June 19: For those who yearn for urns, an auction of decorative garden statuary. (York Ave. at 72nd St. 606-7000.)

William Doyle—Decorative arts in glass by three generations of designers from the Lalique family. (175 E. 87th St. 427-2730. June 14 at 6.)

Christie's—June 15 at 10 and 2: Japanese prints. . . . ¶ June 17 at 10 and 2: Animation art. . . . ¶ June 20 at 10 and 2: Stamps and other philatelic items. (Park Ave. at 59th St. 546-1000.)

For Pre-Trekkies—A show of science-fiction and mystery books, rich in historic editions. (Metropolitan Antiques, 110 W. 19th St. 463-0200. June 15-17.) . . . ¶ An auction of books and cover art from early- and mid-twentieth-century science fiction. (Sotheby's. June 16 at 2.)

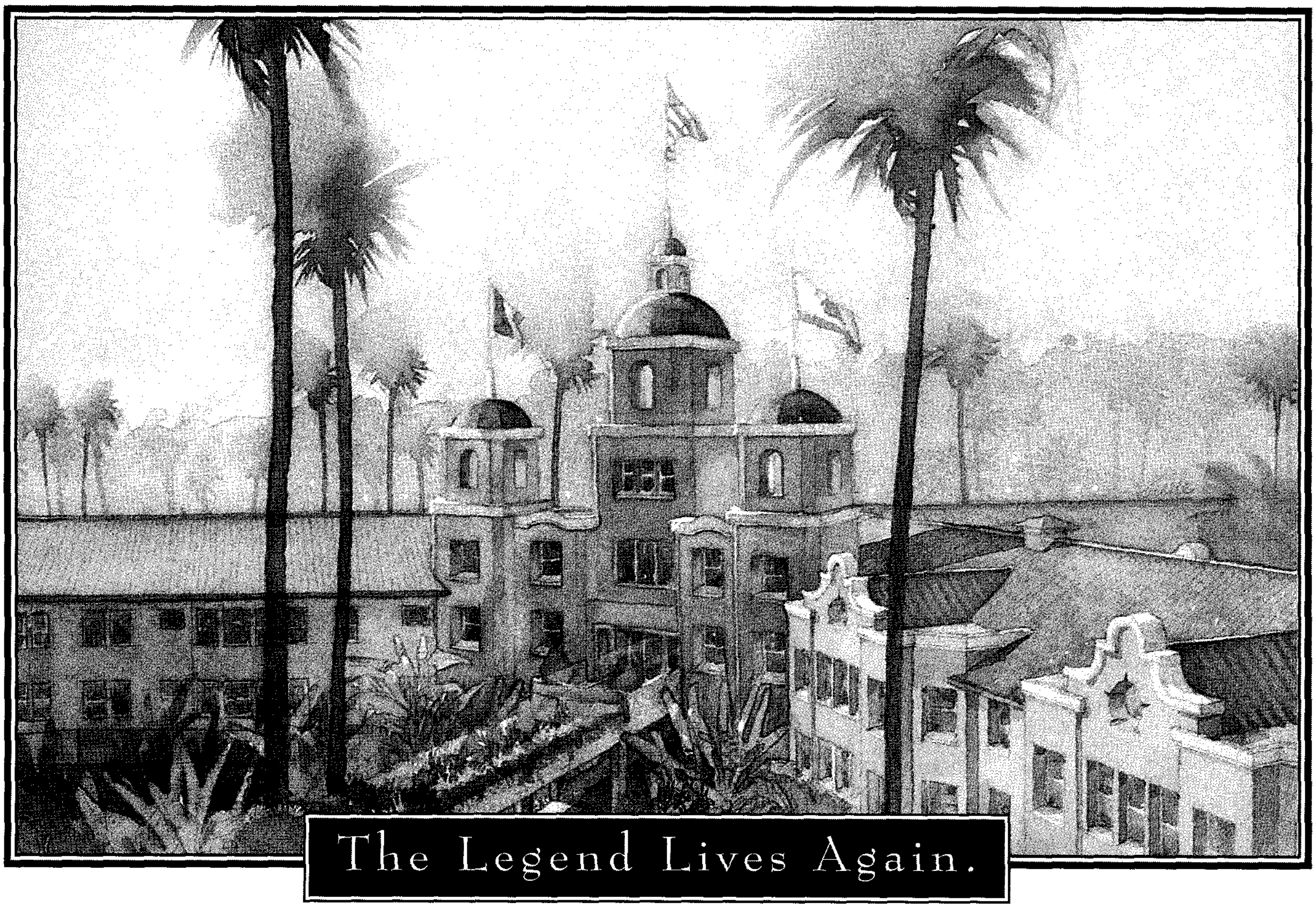
PHOTOGRAPHY

Joel-Peter Witkin—Horror is seductive in these images of hideously mutilated corpses (real ones, from a morgue in Mexico City) that have been propped up in carefully art-directed pseudo-Victorian sets. It's hardly surprising that so many people loathe Witkin's photographs—they're frightening. The work, however, has an essential property of memorable art: it astonishes. Through June 24. (Pace-MacGill, 32 E. 57th St.)

New York School—An exhibition of vintage urban landscapes, street scenes, and portraits by Louis Faurer, Lisette Model, Leon Levinstein, and Weegee. Through June 30. (Sander, 19 E. 76th St.)

"Animal Attractions"—Many members of the kingdom, from Peruvian lambs to one of Siegfried and Roy's white tigers, photographed by James VanDer Zee, Helen Levitt, Emmet Gowin, Mary Ellen Mark, William

ANDREA VENTURA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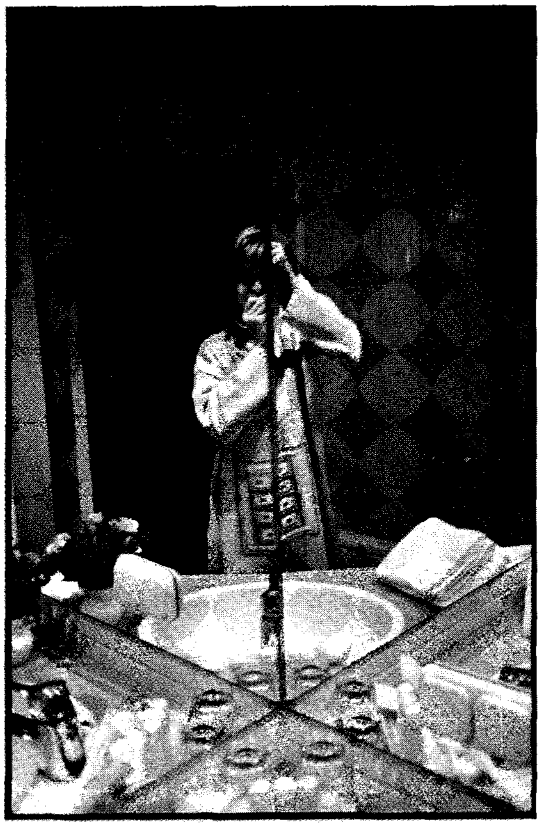
"Subjects from 'Life'"—Work by four *Life* magazine photographers associated with particular celebrities: Mark Shaw (John and Jacqueline Kennedy), John Loengard (Georgia O'Keeffe), Flip Schulke (Martin Luther King, Jr.), and Howell Conant (Grace Kelly). . . . ¶ A small group of photos by Joel Meyerowitz, titled "Eight Shades of Blue." Both shows through June 30. (Danziger, 130 Prince St. Closed Tuesdays.)



Self-portrait by Linda McCartney (Benrubi).

International Center of Photography Midtown—"An American Century of Photography: From Dry-Plate to Digital—The Hallmark Photographic Collection." Two hundred works by both well-known photographers (including Stieglitz, Weston, Strand, and Steiner) and less familiar ones. Through Sept. 10. . . . ¶ "Eyes on an Era," works from the thirties through the sixties by photojournalist Irving Haberman. Through Sept. 10. (Sixth Ave. at 43rd St. Open daily, except Mondays, 11 to 6, and Tuesday evenings until 8.)

Short List—**JOHN BATHO,** Zabriskie, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. Open Mondays, closed Saturdays; through Aug. 31. . . . **ZEKE BERMAN,** Saul, 560 Broadway. Through June 30. . . . **KEVIN BUBRISKI,** National Arts Club, 15 Gramercy Park S. Open Tuesdays, 2 to 6, Wednesdays through Sundays, 12 to 6; through July 9. . . . **EDWARD BURTYNSKY,** Laurence Miller, 138 Spring St. Through June 30. . . . **BRUCE CRATSLEY,** A Different Light Bookstore, 151 W. 19th St. Open daily, 10 to midnight; through June 30. . . . **LINDA MCCARTNEY,** Benrubi, 52 E. 76th St. Through June 30. . . . **ARNO RAFAEL MINKKINEN,** Houk Friedman, 851 Madison Ave., at 70th St. Through July 14. . . . **DAVID NOBLE,** Witkin, 415 West Broadway. Through July 7. . . . **JO ANN VERBURG,** Mann, 42 E. 76th St. Through June 24. . . . **RANDY WEST,** Richardson, 560 Broadway. Through July 8. . . . **BRETT WESTON,** Burden, 20 E. 23rd St. Through July 29.

(See the museum listings for photography exhibitions at the Metropolitan Museum, the Museum of Modern Art, and Dia Center for the Arts.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC

The Inn Thing

THE court orchestras of the eighteenth century are long gone, but something of their spirit lives on at Le Refuge Inn, a late-Victorian bed-and-breakfast on City Island, in the Bronx. For a couple of years now its French-born proprietor, Pierre Saint-Denis, and his musical director, Ilan Rechtman, have been staging Sunday midday performances by recitalists on the rise, adept chamber groups, and, very often, the twelve-to-sixteen-piece City Island Baroque Ensemble. Saint-Denis, a passionate flutist of no mean accomplishment himself, views the concerts as a natural part of his inn's operations: "We want to offer our guests the fine things in life," he explains matter-of-factly. The front parlor, temporarily transformed from a living and dining room into a concert hall, accommodates an audience of fifty or sixty, many of whom linger afterward to socialize. The convivial bunch typically includes overnight guests, concert-circuit regulars, and a loyal contingent of extroverted locals who exemplify the mix of regular folks and maritime workers which gives City Island its refreshingly offbeat character.

OPERA

Metropolitan Opera—Presenting free outdoor concert performances. June 14 at 8: "La Traviata," with Veronica Villarroel, Frank Lopardo, and Kim Josephson; conducted by Edoardo Müller. (Cunningham Park, Queens.) . . . June 16 at 8: "Rigoletto," with Mary Dunleavy, Vincenzo La Scola, and Paolo Gavanelli; Christian Badea. (Van Cortlandt Park, the Bronx.) . . . June 17 at 8: "La Traviata," with Ms. Villarroel, Mr. Lopardo, and Mr. Josephson; Mr. Müller. (Waterloo Village, Stanhope, N.J.) . . . June 20 at 8: "La Traviata," with Ms. Villarroel, Mr. Lopardo, and Paolo Coni; Mr. Müller. (North Meadow, Central Park, above the 97th St. transverse.) . . . **NOTE:** For rain dates and other information, call 362-6000.

ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

Musica Sacra—Richard Westenburg directs Bach's Cantatas No. 4 and No. 150, as well as works by Monteverdi. (Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, Fifth Ave. at 55th St. June 15 at 8. For information about tickets, call 874-3104.)

Jupiter Symphony—The ensemble, conducted by Jens Nygaard, closes its season with two concertos by Mozart: his G-Major Violin Concerto (K. 216, with Robert McDuffie) and F-Major Piano Concerto (K. 459, with David Buechner). (Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church, 152 W. 66th St. June 19 at 2 and 7 and June 20 at 8. For information about tickets, call 799-1259.)

Bach Aria Festival—The festival's orchestra, chorus, and soloists move from Long Island to the Big Apple for one performance, which will include Bach's Cantata No. 80 ("Ein Feste Burg") and "Brandenburg" Concerto No. 4, as well as shorter works by Bach, Mendelssohn, and Brahms. Yehudi Wyner conducts. (Synod Hall, Cathedral of St. John the Divine, Amsterdam Ave. at 110th St. June 20 at 8. Admission by contribution.)

RECITALS

Music for Lunch—At Bryant Park. June 14 and June 16 at noon: Mezzo-soprano Lauren Lipson and keyboard player Karen Schwartz. . . . June 19 at 12:30: The St. Lawrence String Quartet. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ At St. Paul's Chapel. June 15 at noon: Pianist Matthew Rubenstein performs music by C. P. E. Bach, Fauré, and Schumann (his Fantasy, Op. 17). . . . June 19 at noon: The Scharman / Baker flute-and-guitar duo. (Broadway at Fulton St. Admission by contribution.)

Downtown Music Productions—Offering a program of music by composers who are living with AIDS, or who have died from it, including works by Lee Gannon, Robert Chesley, Chris DeBlasio, Calvin Hampton, Deolus Husband, Kevin Oldham, Robert Savage, Nicholas Schaffner, Michael Seyfrit, and William Turner. (Alice Tully Hall. 875-5050. June 14 at 8.)

Bargemusic—An all-Brahms concert, comprising his Sonatensatz for Violin and Piano, Clarinet Trio, and A-Major Piano Quartet; with violinist Mark Peskanov, violist Toby Hoffman, cellist Ronald Thomas, and pianist Anne-Marie McDermott. (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 1-718 624-4061. June 15 at 7:30 and June 18 at 4.)

"Cooler in the Shade" Festival—The opening presentation in a four-concert series of avant-garde music and performance features dancer Nancy Topf and musicians Jon Gibson and Jaron Lanier. (Lotus Center, 109 W. 27th St. 627-1076. June 16 at 8. Through June 30.)

Island Baroque—Violinist Ariel Shamai performs sonatas by Bach and Handel, and cellist Pitnarry Shin plays music by Boccherini; with harpsichordist Ilan Rechtman. (Le Refuge Inn, 620 City Island Ave., City Island, the Bronx. 1-718 885-2478. June 18 at noon.)

Beatrice Muthelet—Violist, with pianist Ilan Rechtman, playing Brahms's Sonata No. 1 and Bach's Sonata No. 3. (Hotel Wales, Madison Ave. at 92nd St. June 18 at 6 and 8. No tickets necessary.)

Trio Bell'Arte—The flute, oboe, and harpsichord ensemble completes its survey of the music of Bach's sons with solo and chamber works by Johann Christoph Friedrich Bach, perhaps the most underappreciated of the brood. (Tenri Cultural Institute, 575 Broadway, at Prince St. 925-8500. June 19 at 8.)

Musicians' Accord—The contemporary-music group celebrates its fifteenth anniversary with works by Berio, Hayes Biggs, Amy Rubin, and Laura Kaminsky. Completing the program is the première of Sheila Silver's song cycle "Transcending: In Memoriam Michael Dash," which was originally to have been sung by the late baritone whom it commemorates. This first performance has instead been entrusted to baritone Kevin Deas, assisted by pianist Sara Laimon. (Weill Recital Hall. 247-7800. June 20 at 8.)

ALSO OF INTEREST

SAMUEL BARTOS AND CAROL RUPERT BARTOS: Two pianists, plus colleagues, in music by Ravel, Shostakovich, and others. (Church of the Resurrection, 115 E. 74th St. June 14 at 8. Admission by contribution.) . . . **NEWORKS:** New music by seven composers. (Christ and St. Stephen's Church, 120 W. 69th St. June 15 at 8. Admission bycontribution.) . . . **"HOTEL EDEN":** An opera by Henry Mollicone, fully staged by the Reimann Opera company. (N.Y.U. Theatre, 35 W. 4th St. June 15-17 at 8. Tickets at the door.) . . . **"LUISA MILLER":** Verdi's opera, staged by the Lyric Theatre. (Pace Downtown Theatre, Spruce St. between Nassau and Gold Sts. 346-1715. June 20 and June 22 at 7.)

OUT OF TOWN

Bach Aria Festival—A two-week investigation of Bach and the composers he influenced. June 14 at 8:30: Yehudi Wyner leads the chamber orchestra and chorus in Bach's Cantata No. 80 and the opening chorus from Cantata No. 133, as well as in excerpts from Handel's "L'Allegro ed il Penseroso" and in "Bachian" works by Mozart. . . . ¶ June 17 at 8:30: Music by Bach (arias, chorales, and the Fourth "Brandenburg" Concerto), Brahms (his Organ Chorale Preludes, Op. 122, in Samuel Baron's orchestral transcription), and Mendelssohn. . . . **NOTE:** A pre-concert performance and discussion, beginning at 7, will focus on Schumann's transcription of Bach's G-Minor and E-Minor Violin Sonatas. . . . ¶ June 18 at 2: Arias, duets, and chamber music by J. S. Bach, C. P. E. Bach, and Jean-Baptiste Loeillet. (Staller Center for the Arts, Stony Brook, Long Island. For information about tickets, call 1-516 632-7230. Through June 27.)

CAPE MAY MUSIC FESTIVAL—June 15 at 8:30: Alan R. Kay conducts the Cape May Festival Orchestra in Stravinsky's "Pulcinella" Suite, Mozart's F-Major Piano Concerto (K. 459, with David Buechner), and Beethoven's Symphony No. 2. . . . ¶ June 18 at 8:30: The American Boy Choir presents a wide-ranging program. (Congress Hall Hotel, Cape May, N.J. For information about tickets, call 1-609 884-5404. The festival runs through June 25.)

OPERA FESTIVAL OF NEW JERSEY—The festival, which will continue through July 16, opens with a new production of "Rigoletto," featuring Kathryn Gamberoni, Keith Buhl, and Hans Choi; conducted by Hal France. (The Lawrenceville School, Lawrenceville, N.J. 1-609 936-1500. June 17 at 8. English supertitles at all performances.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS—The upstate festival's eightieth season opens with an English-language staging by the Overlook Lyric Theatre of two one-act operas by Mozart, "Bastien and Bastienne" and "The Impresario." (Woodstock, N.Y. 1-914 679-8217. June 17 at 8. The season runs through Sept. 3.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN—June 17 at 8: The folk, blues, and jazz performers Bill Crofut and Chris Brubeck, with guitarist Joel Brown. . . . ¶ June 18 at 3: The St. Lawrence String Quartet plays quartets by Mozart (in B-Flat Major, K. 458) and Schumann (in A Minor); Michael Boriskin joins them for Dvořák's A-Major Piano Quintet. (Falls Village, Conn. For information about tickets, call 1-203 824-7126.)

LISTENING BOOTH

BACH FOR ALL TASTES—Sooner or later, most keyboard players take on Bach's "Goldberg" Variations. For the eighteen-year-old pianist Konstantin Lifschitz, the impulse came early: "It was not I who chose this work, it was the work that chose me," the prodigiously gifted Russian has explained. His impetuous but sophisticated new recording (on Denon) fulfills the promise of his two previous Denon releases (though their Romantic repertoire may prove more congenial to him in the long run). The most remarkable of the recent "Goldberg"s, though, is violinist Dmitry Sitkovetsky's version for string orchestra; it's so compelling that Bach-Sitkovetsky could arrive at a place in the annals of transcription next to Bach-Busoni and Bach-Stokowski. The arrangement receives its United States première this week, in Seattle, but anyone can savor it on a Nonesuch recording in which the New European Strings Chamber Orchestra combines interpretative insight with exemplary playing; even suspicious purists will hear contrapuntal felicities that keyboard players can only suggest. Historically informed Bach has an important new entry, too: "Aufs Lautenwerck" (on Dorian), a recital by Kim Heindel on a speculative two-manual reconstruction of the lautenwerk (a hybrid lute-harpsichord of Bach's day; the composer owned two). Heindel plays all Bach's pieces for the instrument, and they suddenly make sense in a way they never have on harpsichord or lute.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

IN RE: THE UNITED STATES v. "ULYSSES"—Celebrations of Bloomsday, the prose-drunk alternative to St. Patrick's Day, bedapple the city. June 16 at 8:30 A.M.: riverrun café serves an Irish breakfast that includes Leopold Bloom's favorite organ meats. Irish airs from the Joycean era and readings accompany. (176 Franklin St. 874-7900, ext. 1188.) . . . ¶ June 16, from 7 P.M. to 1 A.M.: This year's marathon reading at Symphony Space includes the usual Molly Bloom monologue (rendered, whole and unpunctuated, by Fionnula Flanagan), as well as the odd limerick and the performance début of Tennessee Williams's college term paper on "Ulysses" ("Dull and dirty" was his verdict). (Broadway at 95th St. 864-5400.)

WHEELING IN THE YEARS—The New York City Parks Department marks the centennial of the opening of the Ocean Parkway bicycle path, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux to link Prospect Park and Coney Island. On June 15 at 11 A.M., cyclists can trace the route of the original tour, in which ten thousand "wheelmen" rode the nation's first bike path, or join in a parade of vintage bicycles (including a bicycle built for ten). Both events begin at the intersection of Beverly Road, Church Avenue, and Ocean Parkway. For more information, call 1-718 965-8913.

POSIES FOR POSERS—Bodybuilding demonstrations in the community garden at 6th Street and Avenue B precede a workshop in the language of flowers. After the pumping, gardener Connie Bukin helps participants leaf through the lexicon—gooseberry, nettle, red clover, mugwort, and so forth—to make nosegays with particular meanings. For more information, call 417-4921. June 20 at 7.

READINGS—June 14 at 7: Poet Mary Karr reads from "The Liars Club," her memoir of growing up in a Texas oil town. (Limbo, 47 Avenue A, at 4th St. No tickets necessary.) . . . ¶ June 15 at 8:30 A.M.: Random House publisher Harold Evans hosts a breakfast chat about political satire, with representatives from both politics (Ed Koch, Burton B. Roberts) and satire (Lewis Lapham, Jimmy Breslin, Ed Koch). (mad.61, 10 E. 61st St. 886-1100.) . . . ¶ June 16 at 7: Chang-Rae Lee reads from his first novel, "Native Speaker," about Korean immigrants in America. (West Side Y, 5 W. 63rd St. Tickets at the door on the night of the reading.) . . . ¶ June 20 at 1: Bill Moyers brings a posse of poets—Coleman Barks, Lucille Clifton, David Mura, Naomi Shihab Nye, Sekou Sundiata, and Daisy Zamora—from his P.B.S. series, "The Language of Life with Bill Moyers," to Bryant Park. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. No tickets necessary.)

TALKS—June 15 at 7: Biographer Peter Guralnick ("Last Train to Memphis") discusses the methods he is using to research the second volume of his Elvis biography, which follows the King from his first Army days, in 1958, to his death, in 1977. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. Tickets at the door on the evening of the talk.) . . . ¶ June 19 at 5:30: Carl Reiner shows clips from his television work, and thrusts and parries with the audience. (Museum of Television & Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. 621-6600.) . . . ¶ June 20 at 7: In a talk titled "Getting Blood from Stone," urban historian Hope Cook points out traces of New York history in the city's buildings. (Church of the Holy Trinity, 316 E. 88th St. For more information, call the New York Landmarks Conservancy, at 995-5260.)

TOUR—June 17 at 1: Bruce Kayton, of Radical Walking Tours, visits the onetime haunts of Harlem radicals including Malcolm X, Marcus Garvey, and A. Philip Randolph of the Brotherhood of Sleeping-Car Porters. For more information, call 1-718 492-0069.

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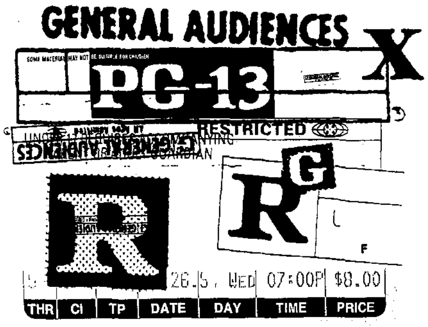


THE MOVIES

FILMS OPENING THIS WEEK

Batman Forever—A new Caped Crusader (Val Kilmer) gets help from Robin (Chris O'Donnell) against Two-Face (Tommy Lee Jones) and the Riddler (Jim Carrey), in the third picture dedicated to law and order in Gotham City. Also starring Nicole Kidman. Directed by Joel Schumacher. Written by Lee Batchler, Janet Scott Batchler, and Akiva Goldsman. Opening June 16. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center.)

The Incredibly True Adventure of Two Girls in Love—Writer-director Maria Maggenti's first feature tells the story of two high-schoolers (Laurel Hollomon and Nicole Parker) who fall for each other. Opening June 16. (Angelika Film Center and Carnegie Hall Cinemas.)

The Postman—A drama about a fisherman's son (the late Massimo Troisi) who delivers mail to Pablo Neruda (Philippe Noiret) on a southern Italian island, where the Chilean poet lived in exile during the early nineteen-fifties. Directed by Michael Radford. Written by Radford, Anna Pavignano, Furio Scarpelli, Giacomo Scarpelli, and Troisi, from Antonio Skármeta's 1985 novel, "Ardiente Paciencia." In Italian. Opening June 14. (Angelika Film Center, Cinema 3rd Avenue, and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

CURRENT FILMS

(The signed notes are by Bruce Diones, Sarah Kerr, Anthony Lane, and Terrence Rafferty. If a movie has been reviewed in The Current Cinema, the date of its review is given. Theatre addresses and phone numbers are listed on page 26.)

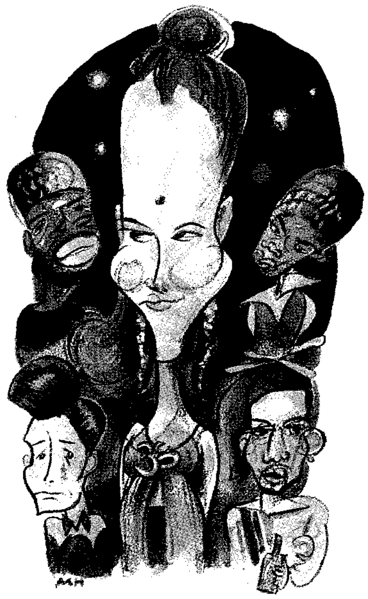
Arizona Dream—A tragicomic tale in which a young man (Johnny Depp) returns to his Arizona home town and falls in love with a local widow (Faye Dunaway) who is trying to build a flying machine. With Jerry Lewis and Lili Taylor. The 1992 film was directed and co-written (with David Atkins) by the Bosnian filmmaker Emir Kusturica (whose "Underground" just took the Palme d'Or at Cannes). (Film Forum; through June 20.)

Braveheart—A triple helping of Mel Gibson: he is the star, director, and co-producer of this hefty new epic, which lasts nearly three hours and covers more than thirty years of medieval Scottish history. Gibson plays William Wallace, the hero with the thrash-metal hair who decides to make life hell for the Englishmen who are crawling all over his country. The political argument that ensues is pretty dull, but the battle scenes are the loudest and most convincing in years: Gibson has learned from Kurosawa in lending a clarifying thrust to what is, essentially, chaos. Patrick McGoohan has too little to chew on as the malicious king of England, and some of the anachronisms ("Take out their archers") spur the movie straight toward camp. For all its silliness, however, it stays firm, and the women give it strength: newcomer Catherine McCormack smiles and expires beautifully as Wallace's wife, and Sophie Marceau has fun as a lovelorn Princess of Wales, desperate for a real man on the side. (Wherever did they get *that* idea?)—A.L. (6/5/95) (Village Theatre VII, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, East 85th Street, Chelsea Cinemas, Ziegfeld, and Lincoln Square.)

The Bridges of Madison County—The screen version of Robert James Waller's 1992 best-seller, directed by Clint Eastwood, starring Eastwood and Meryl Streep. (Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema.) (Village Theatre VII, Murray Hill Cinemas, Tower East, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

Burnt by the Sun—Set in 1936, in the high summer of Stalinist rule, Nikita Mikhalkov's movie centers on a Soviet Army colonel (played by Mikhalkov) and the family group that circulates around him in an idyllic dacha. The idyll cracks when the state, in the person of a family friend (Oleg Menchikov), comes to wreak havoc. The director's eight-year-old daughter, Nadia, offers a sharp-eyed, wholly uncute performance, gazing at the unfolding events with the air of one who will never be able to banish them from her memory. The movie may sound dispiriting, but it has an amazing ability to cheer you up. In Russian.—A.L. (5/8/95) (Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Casper—In what might be an attempt at an apology to parents the world over for last summer's lifeless "Flintstones," Steven Spielberg has taken another shot at producing a TV franchise. The story is pure hokum; it involves a dead mother, a lonely child, a grieving father, hidden treasure, and a dead-are-watching-over-us finale that's almost unbearable. But the production is a wonder of creamy Gaudí-inspired sets and computer-generated marvels. The director, Brad Silberling, gets very convincing performances from Christina Ricci and Bill Pullman, and he allows Casper and his three unruly uncles, Fatso, Stretch, and Stinkie, to steal the film.—B.D. (Murray Hill Cinemas, First & 62nd Cinemas, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Art Greenwich Twin, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and National Twin.)



Parker Posey in "Party Girl."

MARCELLUS HALL

Congo—Laura Linney, Dylan Walsh, Ernie Hudson, and Tim Curry star in an action-adventure movie involving killer apes in Africa. Directed by Frank Marshall. Written by John Patrick Shanley, from Michael Crichton's 1980 novel. (19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, New York Twin, Orpheum VII, Art Greenwich Twin, 84th Street Sixplex, and Astor Plaza.)

Crimson Tide—A doomsday thriller that reunites the infamous "Top Gun" team: producers Don Simpson and Jerry Bruckheimer

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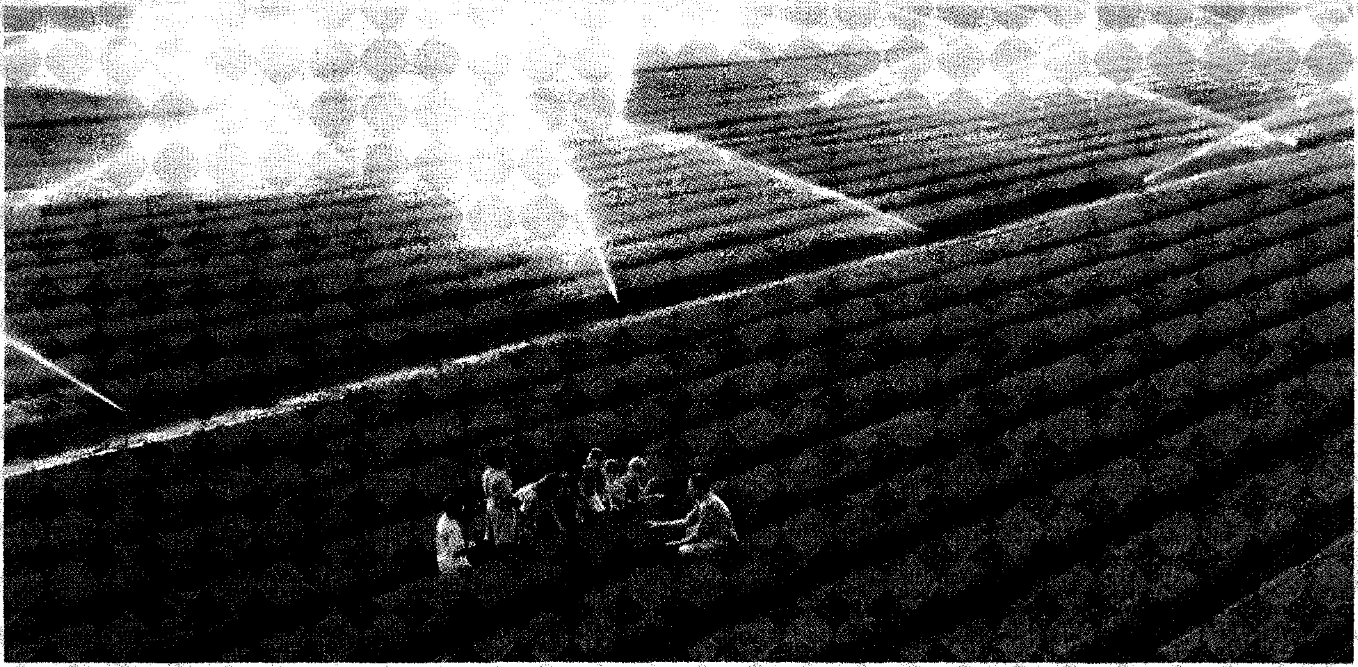
forests

Georgia-Pacific



and director Tony Scott. It's a movie for people who really miss the Cold War. Russkies are on the rampage again, and the fate of the world hangs by its customary thread. Aboard the nuclear sub U.S.S. Alabama, the captain (Gene Hackman) and the executive officer (Denzel Washington) bicker and take turns relieving each other of command. The action is loud and flashy, but there isn't really much suspense. The movie operates in such well-charted waters that it feels less like a dangerous naval mission than like a luxury cruise: the accommodations are cozy and the activities carefully planned.—T.R. (5/15/95) (Village East Cinemas, Murray Hill Cinemas, Cinema I, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, 84th Street Sixplex, and Embassy.)

Crumb—Terry Zwigoff's brilliant, scary documentary about the underground-comics artist R. Crumb. While the film is reviewing Crumb's career, from its psychedelic-era heyday to the present, and following him as he goes about his everyday activities, it's also telling a harrowing story about his damaged family. The movie is often funny, but what makes it extraordinary is that it explores, without presuming to explain, the sources of a unique and savage comic sensibility. And it shows us that Crumb's gift—the detachment that allows him to create such hilariously contemptuous images of the world around him (and inside him)—is also a kind of curse, or, at least, a nasty habit.—T.R. (5/1/95) (Film Forum 3.)

Die Hard with a Vengeance—The third adventure with New York cop John McClane (Bruce Willis), the sweaty, blue-collar American counterpart of James Bond; once again, McClane gets his undershirt dirty foiling the schemes of a world-class megalomaniac (here, Jeremy Irons). John McTiernan—who directed the original "Die Hard" (1988) but sat out the first sequel—has returned, and his professionalism gives the series a lift. He supplies one climax after another, but when the whole intense, meaningless experience is over, you may have trouble putting a name or a face to the movie that just had its way with you. With Samuel L. Jackson.—T.R. (5/29/95) (Murray Hill Cinemas, Baronet, Coronet, Park & 86th Street Cinemas, Waverly, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Olympia, and Criterion Center.)

The Englishman Who Went Up a Hill but Came Down a Mountain—Hugh Grant again unleashes his bashful-boy smile and cloaks himself in an aura of modest, befuddled sincerity. But the illusion of ease has vanished, and his charm has gone with it. For a while, this slight anecdote about a Welsh village during the First World War seems an amiable anachronism—a throwback to the eccentric-community formula of Ealing comedy. But the writer and director, Christopher Monger, tries to pile more meaning onto his story than its fragile structure can support, and he buries the small good thing he started out with.—T.R. (5/15/95) (Village East Cinemas, Sutton, and Cinema 3.)

Forget Paris—Billy Crystal and Debra Winger make one of the great no-sparks couples in recent cinema: he cracks jokes, she looks baffled and strained. Crystal produced, directed, co-wrote, and stars, as Mickey, a basketball referee who flies to Paris (or a tourist parody of Paris) and loses his heart to Ellen (Winger), an airline worker. They get married, and the problems start—for them, and for the movie.—A.L. (5/22/95) (Village Theatre VII, 34th St. East, Beekman, Orpheum VII, Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, Metro Cinema, and Criterion Center.)

French Kiss—Meg Ryan travels to Paris to win back Timothy Hutton, who has gone off with a Frenchwoman. On the plane, she meets Kevin Kline, a French small-time crook and full-time slob. They win each other's hearts, but, boy, does it take a long time. This is cinema as soufflé: light and fluffy if you do it quickly, leathery and sunken if you don't. The director, Lawrence Kasdan, doesn't.—A.L. (5/22/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, Gotham Cinema, 86th Street East Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, Regency, and Embassy.)

The Glass Shield—The writer-director Charles Burnett ("Killer of Sheep," "To Sleep with Anger") uses the cop-thriller form to make a moving and emotionally acute drama of self-knowledge. The hero, J. J. Johnson (Michael Boatman), is an eager, idealistic young cop assigned to an L.A. County Sheriff's station; he's the first black man ever to serve there. J.J. is caught in a no man's land: members of his own community look at him as if he were a traitor, and the angry white men he works with consider him an outsider. The movie's early scenes are dominated by Boatman's brilliant performance as a man who, in the attempt to be all things to all people, becomes a mystery to himself. Later, as J.J. begins to uncover evidence of corruption, the film's scope widens, but the director's lucid style never falters. In Burnett's hands, this story (which was inspired by the real-life experiences of a black deputy) dramatizes a simple and profoundly political idea: you can't know yourself until you know what you're a part of. In its quiet way, this is the most subversive American movie in years. Also with Lori Petty, Richard Anderson, Ice Cube, Bernie Casey, Michael Ironside, M. Emmet Walsh, and Elliott Gould.—T.R. (6/12/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 34th Street Showplace, First & 62nd Cinemas, 86th Street East Twin, 23rd St. West Triplex, 62nd & Broadway, and Embassy 1.)

Hotel Sorrento—Australian director Richard Franklin's drama about a reunion of three sisters—a widowed mother (Carlone Gillmer), a New York executive (Tara Morice), and a London-based novelist (Caroline Goodall)—at their family home in a seaside resort south of Melbourne. With Joan Plowright, Ben Thomas, and John Hargreaves. Adapted by the director and Peter Fitzpatrick, from Hannie Rayson's 1990 play. (Eastside Playhouse and Quad Cinema.)

Johnny Mnemonic—The hero (Keanu Reeves) is a twenty-first-century information courier, whose surgically reconfigured brain can be hooked up directly to computers. At the beginning, Johnny accepts a shipment that's much too large for his storage capacity, and, to make matters worse, no one has the complete access code to retrieve the data in his head; if he doesn't download within twenty-four hours, he'll die. He's up the information creek without a paddle. It's a nice premise, and the script, by the cyberpunk pioneer William Gibson, embellishes it ingeniously. But Robert Longo—an artist and music-video auteur making his début as a feature-film director—drains the life out of the story. The action feels inert, and the movie's vision of the future seems to have been assembled from rusted scraps of eighties science-fiction pictures like "Blade Runner" and "Escape from New York." The performances—by a cast that includes Ice-T, Dina Meyer, Dolph Lundgren, Barbara Sukowa, and Henry Rollins—are worthy of an Ed Wood ensemble.—T.R. (6/12/95) (Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 19th Street East 6, 34th Street Showplace, Gemini, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and National Twin.)

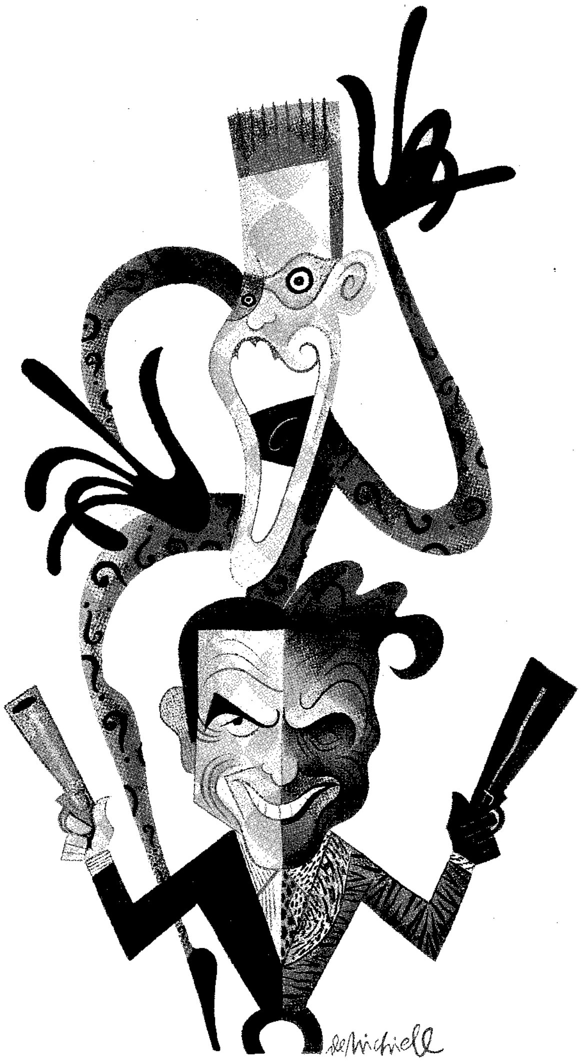
Liability Crisis—Richard Brody wrote and directed this drama about a frustrated Jewish filmmaker (Jim Helsinger), who is obsessed with the Holocaust, and his lover (Mirjana Jokovic). (Quad Cinema.)

Little Odessa—Joshua the hit man (Tim Roth) returns to the Russian section of Brooklyn on a job, and for the first time in years he links up with his family: his mopey younger brother (Edward Furlong), his dying mother (Vanessa Redgrave), and his disapproving, belt-wielding father (Maximilian Schell). The writer and director, James Gray, draws formidable work from his cast. This potent, cheerless movie gets to you, and gets you down. It's one for a rainy day.—A.L. (Village Theatre VII and 84th Street Sixplex.)

A Little Princess—Alfonso Cuarón's film, based on a novel by Frances Hodgson Burnett, is one of the rare children's movies that don't merely pay lip service to the imagination but actually use it. The script presents the battle of youthful fancy against adult "realism" as a kind of epic struggle; the antagonists are Sara Crewe (Liesel Matthews), a bright, happy, exuberantly creative girl, and Miss Minchin (Eleanor Bron), a boarding-school headmistress who is a ruthless downsizer of her pupils' imaginations. The message, spoken by Sara, is "*All* girls are little princesses," and, although that may sound a bit sticky, this funny, lively, stirring movie makes us believe it.—T.R. (5/29/95) (Gemini and Olympia.)

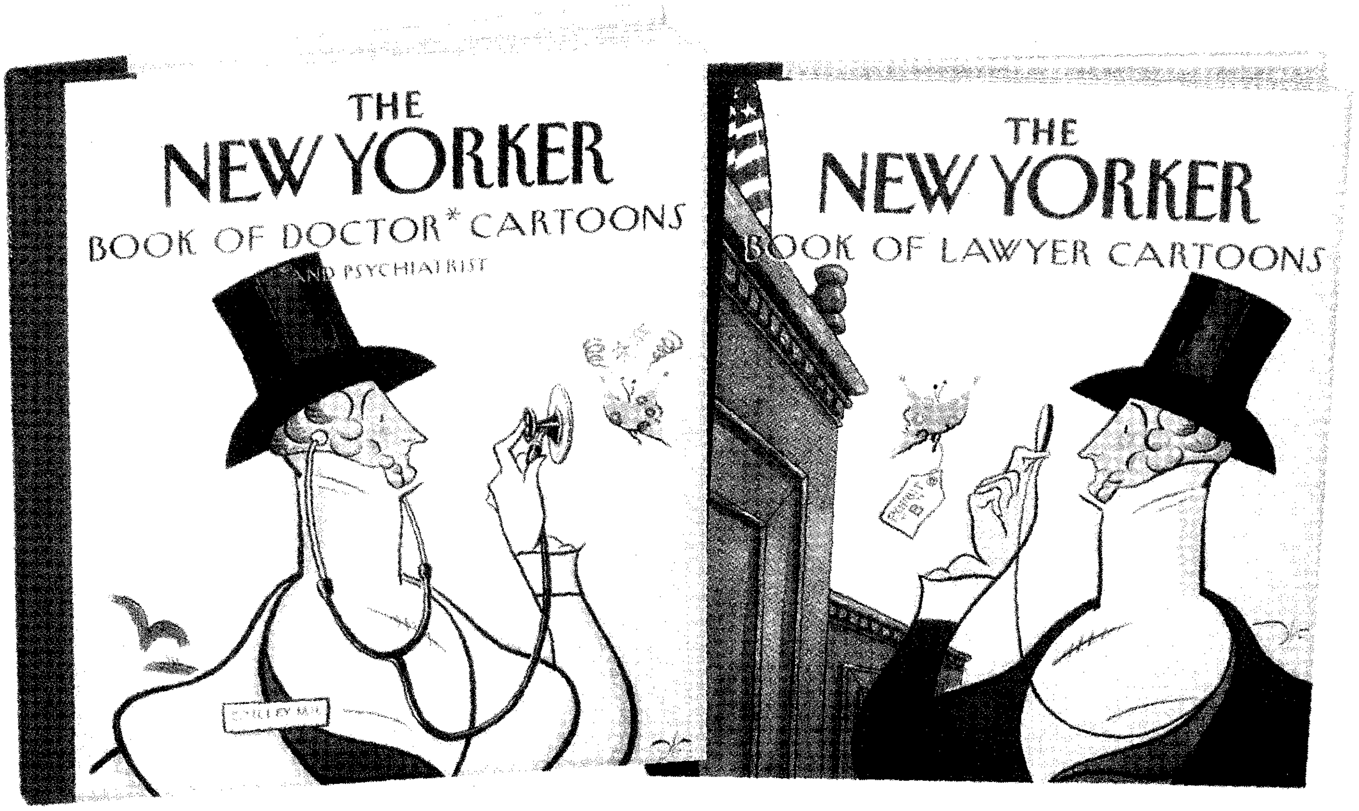
Love and Human Remains—Denys Arcand's 1993 comedy about two roommates (Thomas Gibson and Ruth Marshall), who were once lovers, and their circle of friends. Written by Brad Fraser, from his 1991 drama, "Unidentified Human Remains and the True Nature of Love." (Quad Cinema and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Mad Love—Matt (Chris O'Donnell), a Seattle high-school senior, falls in love with Casey (Drew Barrymore), the wild



Jim Carrey (as the Riddler) and Tommy Lee Jones (as Two-Face) in "Batman Forever."

ROBERT DEMICHIELL



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WHAT'S FUNNY about doctors is **THE NEW YORKER BOOK OF DOCTOR CARTOONS.** In 85 uproarious cartoons, here are analysts analyzing, doctors prescribing, operating, referring ("I'd like you to see a botanist. You exhibit many of the symptoms of Dutch elm disease"); doctors being sensitive ("The doctor will see you now, Mrs. Perkins. Please try not to upset him."); doctors being confrontational ("The doctor's lawyer will see you now."). From internists to acupuncturists, here are doctors of every stripe deftly dissected by great *New Yorker* cartoonists from James Thurber and Peter Arno, to Shanahan and Chast.

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The kitten-size NEW YORKER BOOK OF CAT CARTOONS

THE NEW YORKER BOOK OF DOG CARTOONS

new girl at school, and the message is hard to pin down. The picture starts out like a grunge updating of a fifties rock-and-roll melodrama, with paternal meanies (his weak and bitter, hers cold and inexplicably strict) trying to break up a pair of sensitive kids. Once they escape and head for Mexico, though, Matt has to admit that Casey gets a little weird without her medication. By the end, the movie could be an infomercial for psychopharmacology. O'Donnell is especially touching as a love-starved but honorable boy. Written by Paula Milne; directed by Antonia Bird.—S.K. (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Sutton, 86th Street East Twin, Guild, and Olympia.)

The Mystery of Rampo—In this fictional drama set in the nineteen-thirties, the real-life Japanese author Edogawa Rampo (1894-1965), played by Naoto Takenaka, investigates a murder and falls in love with the victim's widow. Directed by Kazuyoshi Okuyama, who co-wrote the screenplay with Yuhei Enoki. In Japanese. (Village East Cinemas.)

Party Girl—In "Dazed and Confused," Parker Posey stood out as a sadistic popular girl. Here, as Mary, a trendy downtown New Yorker forced by circumstances to work as a library clerk, she is on her way to creating a new female comic persona: wiry, hyperactive, tough, and insensitive, but somehow sympathetic. The hilarious script, co-written by first-time director Daisy von Scherler Mayer and Harry Birckmayer, is about growing up—symbolized here by frivolous Mary's mastery of the Dewey Decimal System. With Omar Townsend as the Lebanese falafel vender she has a crush on, and the director's mother, Sasha von Scherler, as her disapproving godmother.—S.K. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Square.)

Smoke—A series of vignettes directed by Wayne Wang, about the staff and patrons of a Brooklyn cigar store. With Harvey Keitel, William Hurt, Stockard Channing, Harold Perrineau, Jr., Forest Whitaker, and Victor Argo. Written by Paul Auster. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

Tales from the Hood—Clarence Williams III plays the bug-eyed master of ceremonies in this Spike Lee-produced comic horror anthology with a predominantly black cast. The tales are tired, the humor negligible, and the victims (including a David Duke-like politician and some racist cops) easy targets. When the final story strives for something deeper—an indictment of black-on-black violence—the movie falls into wretched moralizing; it's an after-school special with dirty words. Directed by Rusty Cundieff.—B.D. (Village Theatre VII, 19th Street East 6, Manhattan Twin, Orpheum VII, 84th Street Sixplex, and Criterion Center.)

While You Were Sleeping—Sandra Bullock is a sad and lonely subway clerk (yeah, right) who drags a handsome customer (Peter Gallagher) away from an oncoming train. She's in love with *him*, but he's in a coma, and his brother (Bill Pullman) falls in love with *her*. Out of this pleasing confusion the director, Jon Turteltaub, has fashioned something so simple and predictable that you have no option but to submit. Bullock knows one of the secrets of doing romantic comedy: treating the romance as a good joke.—A.L. (5/22/95) (Village East Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, Cinema II, Lincoln Square, and Embassy.)

Wigstock: The Movie—Barry Shils's documentary look at New York's outdoor drag festival. With RuPaul, Mistress Formika, and The Lady Bunny (the founder and m.c. of the annual downtown event). (Angelika Film Center.)

ALSO PLAYING

THE BASKETBALL DIARIES: Village East Cinemas. . . . **BULLETS OVER BROADWAY** (reviewed in our issue of 10/31/94): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **CHARULATA:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas. . . . **CLERKS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DOLORES CLAIBORNE** (4/3/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **DON JUAN DE MARCO** (4/10/95): Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **EXOTICA:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **FARINELLI:** Carnegie Hall Cinema. . . . **FLUKE:** 19th Street East 6, First & 62nd Cinemas, Orpheum VII, Waverly, Lincoln Square, and Criterion Center. . . . **FRIDAY:** Criterion Center. . . . **JEFFERSON IN PARIS:** Paris. . . . **KISS OF DEATH** (5/1/95): Manhattan Twin. . . . **ONCE WERE WARRIORS:** Plaza. . . . **PANTHER:** Movieland 8th Street Triplex. . . . **THE PEREZ FAMILY:** First & 62nd Cinemas and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . **PICTURE BRIDE:** Village East Cinemas. . . . **PRIEST** (3/27/95): Village East Cinemas, 68th St. Playhouse, and 23rd St. West Triplex. . . . **A PURE FORMALITY:** Village East Cinemas and Carnegie Hall Cinema. . . . **PUSHING HANDS:** Cinema Village and Angelika 57. . . . **ROB ROY** (4/17/95): 59th Street East Cinema. . . . **SEARCH AND DESTROY:** Angelika Film Center. . . . **STRAWBERRY AND CHOCOLATE:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **SWIMMING WITH SHARKS:** Worldwide Cinemas. . . . **WINGS OF COURAGE** (4/24/95): Lincoln Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

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EAST SIDE

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St. (995-2000).
Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171).
Movieland 8th Street Triplex, 36 E. 8th (477-6600).
Village Theatre VII, 3rd Ave. at 11th (982-0400).
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th (924-3363).
Village East Cinemas, 2nd Ave. at 12th (529-6799).
19th Street East 6, B'way at 19th (260-8000).
Murray Hill Cinemas, 160 E. 34th (689-6548).
34th Street Showplace, 238 E. 34th (532-5544).
34th St. East, 241 E. 34th (683-0255).
Eastside Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 55th (755-3020).
Sutton I and 2, 3rd Ave. at 57th (759-1411).
Gotham Cinema, 3rd Ave. at 58th (759-2262).
Plaza, 42 E. 58th (355-3320).
Manhattan Twin, 3rd Ave. at 59th (935-6420).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th (759-4630).
Baronet and Coronet, 3rd Ave. at 59th (355-1663).
Cinema I, Cinema II, and Cinema 3rd Avenue, 3rd Ave. at 60th (753-6022).
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd (513-5408).
Gemini I and 2, 2nd Ave. at 64th (832-1670).
Beekman, 2nd Ave. at 66th (737-2622).
New York Twin, 2nd Ave. at 67th (744-7339).
68th St. Playhouse, 3rd Ave. at 68th (734-0302).
Tower East, 3rd Ave. at 71st (879-1313).
East 85th Street, 1st Ave. at 85th (249-5100).
Park & 86th Street Cinemas, 125 E. 86th (534-1880).
Orpheum VII, 3rd Ave. at 86th (876-2400).
86th Street East Twin, 3rd Ave. at 86th (249-1144).

WEST SIDE

Film Forum, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110).
Waverly I and 2, 6th Ave. at 3rd (929-8037).
Art Greenwich Twin, Greenwich Ave. at 12th (929-3350).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th (255-8800).
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd (513-5402).
23rd St. West Triplex, 333 W. 23rd (989-0060).
Guild, 33 W. 50th (757-2406).
Worldwide Cinemas, 50th St., between 8th and 9th Aves. (504-0960).
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th (765-7600).
Carnegie Hall Cinemas, 7th Ave. between 56th and 57th (265-2520).
Angelika 57, 225 W. 57th (586-1900).
Paris, 4 W. 58th (980-5656).
Cinema 3, 2 W. 59th (752-5959).
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd (265-7466).
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, B'way at 63rd (757-2280).
Regency, B'way at 67th (724-3700).
Lincoln Square, B'way at 68th (336-5000).
84th Street Sixplex, B'way at 84th (877-3600).
Metro Cinema I and 2, B'way at 99th (222-1200).
Olympia I and II, B'way at 107th (865-8128).

TIMES SQUARE AREA

Criterion Center, B'way at 44th (354-0900).
Embassy I, B'way at 46th (302-0494).
Embassy 2, 3, and 4, 7th Ave. at 47th (730-7262).
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at B'way (869-8340).
National Twin, B'way at 44th (869-0950).

THIRD ANNUAL
Bryant Park Summer Film Festival '95

Casablanca June 19
Anatomy Of A Murder June 26
Meet Me In St. Louis July 3
Laura July 10
Born Yesterday July 17
Strangers On A Train July 24
The War Of The Worlds July 31
Top Hat Aug. 7
Sabrina Aug. 14
The Searchers Aug. 21
Auntie Mame Aug. 28
Barefoot In The Park Sept. 4

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REVIVALS

(The following notes are by Pauline Kael and Michael Sragow. Theatre addresses and phone numbers appear with the listings following these notes.)

Dear Inspector (1977)—An overly familiar comic melodrama, directed by Philippe de Broca. The romance between Annie Girardot, a police detective, and Philippe Noiret, a cop-hating intellectual (he teaches Greek at the Sorbonne), is too genteel, and the murder mystery is trite. Though she's a solid, salty actress, Girardot fails to transcend the silliness of her character, a woman who can't reconcile romance and a job. And Noiret's sheepdog shuffle doesn't do much to energize the material—it all goes down too easy, like the mildest aperitif. In French.—M.S. (Florence Gould Hall; June 20.)

The Great Gabbo (1929)—After the picture he was directing—"Queen Kelly"—was cancelled, Erich von Stroheim turned to acting and had a popular success as a megalomaniac ventriloquist who expresses his sensitive feelings only through his grotesque little dummy, Otto. Directed by James Cruze, from a Ben Hecht story, the film is effective only in a few bits. When the ventriloquist gets into the Follies, his story gets lost between mediocre musical-comedy numbers (which were originally in color). With the talented Betty Compson.—P.K. (American Museum of the Moving Image; June 18.)

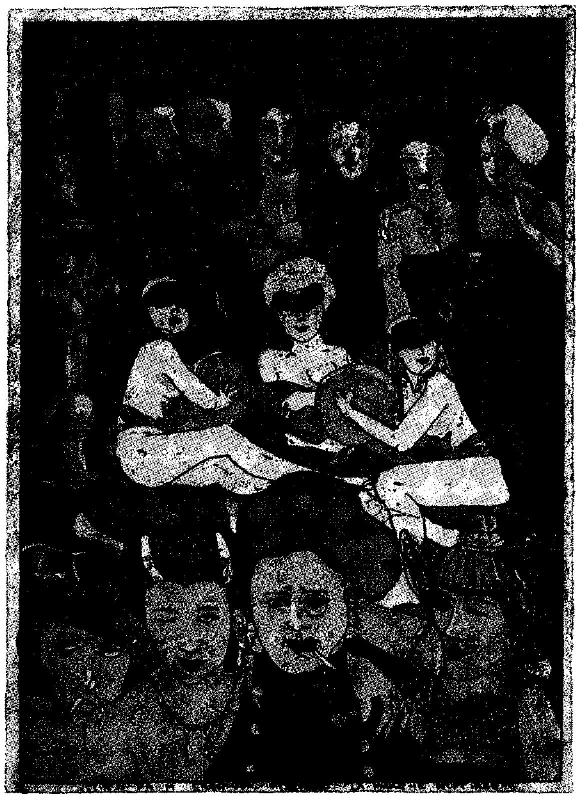
A Man for All Seasons (1966)—The director, Fred Zinnemann, places himself at the service of Robert Bolt's play about the moral tug of war between Sir Thomas More (Paul Scofield) and Henry VIII (Robert Shaw), and the results are tasteful and moderately enjoyable. The weakness is that though Bolt's dialogue is crisp, lucid, and well spoken, his presentation of More's martyrdom is so one-sided we don't even get to understand *that* side. More is the only man of honor in the movie, and he's got all the good lines; he's the kind of hero we used to read about in biographies of great men written for twelve-year-olds, and Scofield is so refined, so controlled, so dignified, so obviously "subtle" he's like a man of conscience in a school play.—P.K. (Anthology Film Archives; June 16-18.)

Miss Julie (1950)—Strindberg's passionate, relentless drama of sexual debasement, directed by Alf Sjöberg. Anita Björk is the fragile, capricious, feudal aristocrat who encourages her father's valet to seduce her; she sustains the demanding role with intensity and grace. As the valet, Ulf Palme matches her performance with a surly, sly arrogance that makes his conquest of her a true degradation. The expansion of the play over considerable lyric acreage and preceding generations is ill-advised; it tends to dissipate the confined, harrowing drama. But the performances make this a powerful version, nevertheless. In Swedish.—P.K. (Museum of Modern Art; June 16.)

Two Daughters (1961)—Originally the film had three stories and was called "Three Daughters." Satyajit Ray is at his most splendid in two short-story films based on works by Rabindranath Tagore. The first, "The Postmaster"—a story of betrayal—is a pure and simple small masterpiece; the second, "The Conclusion," has some memorable scenes, beauty, and wit but also has some defects of rhythm, so it is merely wonderful—and a little wearying. In Bengali.—P.K. (Lincoln Plaza Cinemas; starting June 16.)

Whisky Galore (1949; "Tight Little Island")—The only amusing famine in movie history is the whiskey famine on the mythical Scottish island of Todday; the wartime ration of whiskey has run out, and the island is devastated by drought. Then a ship bound for the United States with fifty thousand cases of Scotch is wrecked on the shore, and the parched islanders take on the sweet task of salvage. Alexander Mackendrick directed this convivial little classic, based on Compton Mackenzie's novel "Whisky Galore," adapted by Mackenzie and Angus MacPhail. With Joan Greenwood, Gordon Jackson, Basil Radford, Mackenzie himself, and a contingent of gloomy Scots. Photographed on Barra, the Hebrides.—P.K. (Film Forum 2; through June 15.)

The Wind (1928)—In Victor Sjöström's silent masterpiece of psychological terror, a well-bred Virginia girl (Lillian Gish) goes to Texas to live with her cousin, only to be turned out by his jealous wife and hounded by the men and the wind that pound the countryside. From the opening sequence of a train slicing through the landscape to the climax of a corpse buried in the blowing sand, the film moves like greased lightning. It's a brilliant anti-Western: when the heroine picks up a gun, what happens is both shocking and inevitable. (M-G-M is to blame for the jarring happy ending.) Gish is superb, her emotions unravelling like a frayed hemline. This performance compelled Vladimir Nemirovich-Danchenko, co-founder of the Moscow Art Theatre, to rank Gish "in the small circle of the first tragediennes of the world." Frances Marion adapted Dorothy Scarborough's novel.—M.S. (Film Forum 2; starting June 16.)



At the American Museum of the Moving Image, Erich von Stroheim's "The Wedding March."

ROBERT ANDREW PARKER

Woman of the Year (1942)—The first of the films co-starring Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy. The chemistry is great, but the plot and the tone are wobbly. He's a sportswriter, and she's a celebrated political journalist (probably modelled on Dorothy Thompson) who doesn't know how to be a woman. The comedy goes sour whenever the movie scores points against her, and the slapstick resolution has an air of desperation. George Stevens directed.—P.K. (Metropolitan Museum of Art; June 16-17.)

LATE RUNS, CLASSICS, ETC.

(Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.)

Film Forum 2, 209 W. Houston St. (727-8110)—Through June 15: "The Titfield Thunderbolt" (1953, Charles Crichton) and "Whisky Galore" (†). . . . June 19: "Lorna Doone" (1935, Basil Dean) and "Painted Boats" (1945, Crichton). . . . ¶ From June 16 (except June 19): "The Wind" (†).

Little Theatre, Public Theatre, 425 Lafayette St. (598-7171)—"Bab El-oued City" (1994, Merzak Allouache; in Arabic and French).

Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (924-3363)—Through June 15: "Pushing Hands" (1992, Ang Lee). . . . ¶ From June 16: "Short & Nasty," short films by filmmakers under twenty-five.

Museum of Modern Art, Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (708-9480)—A series of Swedish films directed by Alf Sjöberg. June 15 at 2:30 and June 20 at 6: "Flowering Time" (1940). . . . June 15 at 6: "Only a Mother" (1949). . . . June 15 at 8: "Barabbas" (1953). . . . June 16 at 2:30: "Home from Babylon" (1941). . . . June 16 at 6: "Miss Julie" (†). . . . June 17 at 2: "The Road to Heaven" (1942). . . . June 17 at 5: "The Judge" (1960). . . . June 18 at 2: "The Strongest" (1929). . . . June 18 at 5: "The Royal Hunt" (1944). . . . June 19 at 2:30: "Torment" (1944). . . . June 19 at 6: "Last Couple Out" (1956). . . . June 20 at 2:30: "Iris and the Lieutenant" (1946). . . . ¶ June 15 at 3 and 6: "City of Steppes" (1994, Peter Brosens and Odo Halflants). . . . ¶ June 16 at 3 and 6 and June 17-18 at 2:30 and 5: Avant-garde films from Austria. . . . ¶ June 19 at 12:30, 3, and 6: "The AICP Show, 1995: The Art and Technique of the American Television Commercial."

Walter Reade Theatre, Lincoln Center, 165 W. 65th St., plaza level (875-5600)—June 14 at 2 and 6:30 and June 15 at 2: "Fanny and Alexander" (1983, Ingmar Bergman; in Swedish). . . . ¶ June 15 at 6:30: "The Wife" (1994, Tom Noonan). . . . ¶ June 15 at 9: "After the Rehearsal" (1984, Bergman; in Swedish). . . . ¶ The 1995 Human Rights Watch International Film Festival will be on for the next two weeks (June 16-30), with films by Costa-Gavras, Tomás Gutiérrez Alea, Carol Jacobsen, and many others. . . . ¶ June 17 at 11 and June 18 at 2: "Simon Small Moves In" (1990, Staffan Götestam; in Swedish), for children.

Museum of Television and Radio, 25 W. 52nd St. (621-6800)—A retrospective of Ingmar Bergman's television work. June 14 at 2: "Face to Face" (1975). . . . June 15-16 at 2: "Ingmar Bergman: The Magic Lantern" (1988). . . . June 15-16 at 3: "Ingmar Bergman: The Director" (1988). . . . June 15 at 5, June 16 at 6, and June 18 at 1: "The Dick Cavett Show: A Conversation with Ingmar Bergman" (1971). . . . June 15 at 6:15 and June 16 at 7:15: "A Play for Today: The Lie" (1970). . . . June 17 at 1: "The South Bank Show: Ingmar Bergman at Sixty" (1978). . . . June 17 at 2 and June 18 at 2:15: "The Best Intentions" (1991). . . . June 20 at 2: "Man Alive Presents Ingmar Bergman" (1970). . . . June 20 at 3: "The Ritual" (1969).

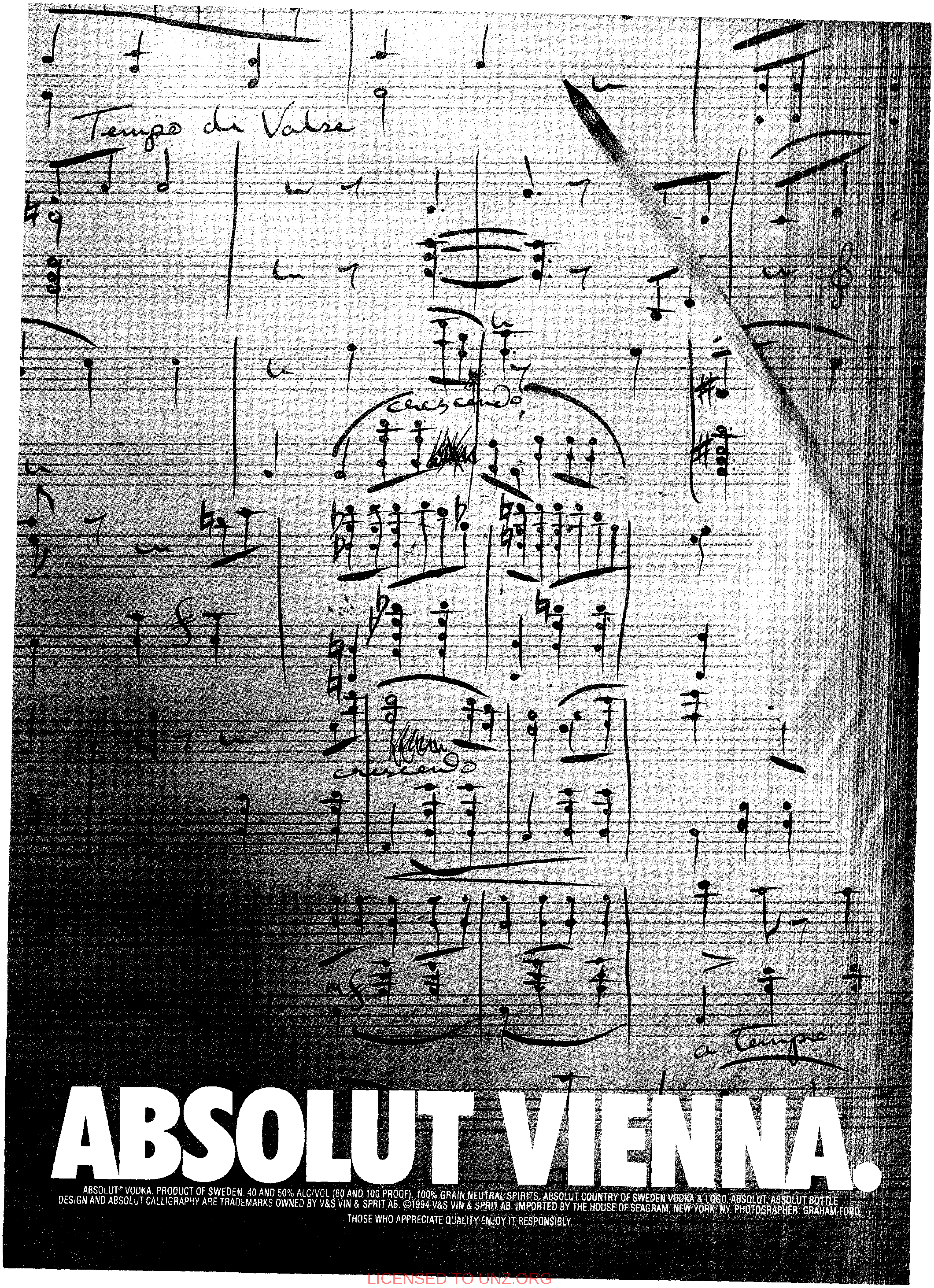
American Museum of the Moving Image, 35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (1-718 784-0077)—June 17 at 2: "The Merry Widow" (1925, Erich von Stroheim). . . . ¶ June 17 at 4:30: "The Wedding March" (1928, von Stroheim). . . . ¶ June 18 at 2: "Queen Kelly" (1928, von Stroheim). . . . ¶ June 18 at 4: "The Great Gabbo" (†).

Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. (355-6160)—June 20 at 12:30, 3:15, 6, and 8:45: "Dear Inspector" (†).

Metropolitan Museum of Art, Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (570-3949)—June 16-17 at 7: "Woman of the Year" (†).

Bryant Park, Sixth Ave. at 42nd St.—Mondays, starting at dusk: free drive-in-style moviegoing, beginning with Looney Tunes and coming attractions. The feature on June 19 will be "Casablanca" (1942, Michael Curtiz). (Rain date is the following night.)

Anthology Film Archives, 32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (505-5181)—June 16 at 9 and June 17-18 at 7: "A Man for All Seasons" (†).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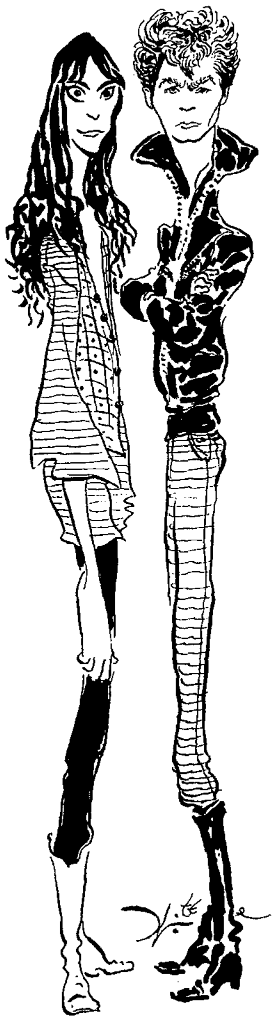
NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

THEIR FRIENDSHIP, THEIR MASTERPIECE

THE legendary singer Patti Smith, with her tough-girl stance and incendiary language, still looms large in the public consciousness as the first great female rock-and-roll poet. But Patti Smith, whose hallmark incantatory rasp is familiar from a number of recordings, doesn't *sound* like Patti Smith unless she's talking about something she's especially passionate about.



ILLUSTRATIONS BY MICHAEL WITTE

Among the subjects Smith is currently passionate about is the portrayal of the late photographer Robert Mapplethorpe in the new biography "Mapplethorpe," by the journalist Patricia Morrisroe.

Morrisroe's sensationalist portrait of Mapplethorpe's controversial life has disturbed many of the people who knew him best, and none more than Smith. "I wanted to talk about Robert, because I didn't recognize him from what Patricia had to say," Smith said the other day, from her home outside Detroit, where she lives with her two children. Breaking a habit of not speaking with reporters, she said, "It seems to me that Patricia's position is that of someone who didn't even *like* Robert. I mean, Patricia spent six years of her life on Robert, only to end up thinking his life was depressing. Robert's life was not depressing. Dying of AIDS is."

In "Mapplethorpe," much is made of Smith's love affair with the famously homosexual photographer, which began when they were both twenty and developed into one of the most sustained friendships of Mapplethorpe's life. (He succumbed to AIDS in 1989, at forty-two.) "I believed in Robert," Smith recalled. "He sheltered me. And, in exchange, I supported him." She pointed out that their friendship withstood their public notoriety and private turmoil because "our work sustained us—we both had this incredible work ethic." And it was their admiration for each other's work that resulted in several collaborations, the most haunting of which is Mapplethorpe's 1975 portrait of Smith for the cover of her début album, "Horses." The photograph documents Smith's exploration of a different kind of female beauty, uninfluenced by convention or fashion: ascetic and self-contained, "plain" but charismatic.

On a recent visit to New York, Smith was still in possession of her angular charm; her equine features were still distinctive. The only indications of the passage of time were strands of gray in her pigtails and a sadness in her voice when someone expressed sympathy over the recent death of her husband, the musician Fred (Sonic) Smith, and of her younger brother, Todd.

"When I spoke to Patricia, I gave her what I thought was a good sense of what it was like to be an artist," Smith said. "I saw Robert go from an extremely shy misfit to an extremely accomplished person. The years in between were represented in the book as one hustle after another. We were all poor and humble." Following the dissolution of their love affair, Mapplethorpe and Smith continued to room together. "I wasn't a singer then," Smith said. "I was a poet. And Robert hadn't picked up a camera. When I think of those times, I think of the joyfulness, the youthful fervor. We weren't plotting and planning to be famous. We just had a million ideas and lots of energy. Innocence prevailed."

Smith's words conjured up what the poet Rene Ricard once said about Mapplethorpe and Smith's friendship—that it was their "masterpiece." As their generation's American version of Britain's Bright Young Things, they were photographed a great deal, most eloquently by Mapplethorpe's art-school classmate Judy Linn, in the late sixties. In Linn's portraits, Mapplethorpe and Smith look like each other's mirror image: thin, ghostly pale, with huge dark eyes framed by even darker hair.

"If Robert was part hustler, or whatever, fine," Smith said, her idiosyncratic accent—part deep New Jersey, part Smokey Robinson—becoming more noticeable. "But he did his work. And he didn't want to be obscure, because he wanted to change things. Taking photographs as an openly gay man was a revolutionary concept when he began. This book has him screwing all the time. But he worked until the day he died. The very last conversation I had with

Robert—he was *dying*—was about work. And how he wanted me to write the text for his photographs of flowers. Which I did."

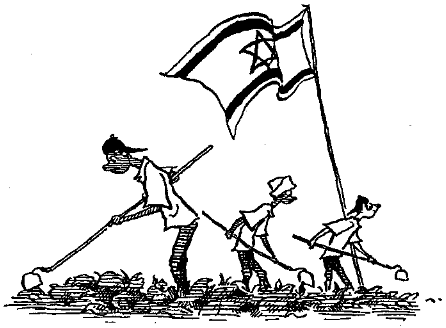
Among the projects Smith is now pursuing are "Ain't Nuthin' but a She Thing," a compilation album to benefit women's issues (she'll sing the Nina Simone standard "Don't Smoke in Bed"), and a new solo album—her first in seven years—which she will record in New York this summer. "Working on these projects makes me think of Robert, always," Smith said. "The camera made him take responsibility for his actions. It was like what Robert was always saying—'I'll take responsibility for my actions, but I want the freedom to act.' "

URBAN RENEWAL

FOURTEEN black and Hispanic students from West Side High School, an alternative public school for kids who are considered to be "at risk," recently gathered in a classroom on the eleventh floor of the garment-district office building that houses the school to tell other students, and teachers, about two and a half months they had just spent in the Middle East, most of it working on the Kibbutz Lehavot Habashan, in Israel. Several of these kids had never before been on an airplane; a few had never left New York City. Like blind people granted sight, they had been amazed by humble things. Clifford Slaughter, who wore a red cap tilted back at south-southeast, said that on a trip to Eilat he saw "clear water" for the first time in his life. Mirtha Medina, whom everyone calls Milky, said she was feeling sad one morning and went out to the children's little red swing and swung and thought for hours—and nobody hassled her. Mike Nelson said, "I was shocked the first time I was visiting my family, and they just left me in their house *alone*. I was sitting in their house like, *Whoa!* They don't do this in New York—you come back and your stuff is missing."

The students, who had grown up in ghettos, were the latest beneficiaries of a six-year-old program run by a nonprofit group called Youthworks. On the kibbutz, they lived together, woke up at five-thirty in the morning, and spent the day on such tasks as working in the garden or tending a flock of truculent turkeys. Many of them were used to a life in which virtually nothing was asked of them, or offered to them, and at first they were lonely, homesick, bored. But within weeks they had been overwhelmed by the generosity and the sheer warmth of the kibbutz. Lehavot Habashan is only a few miles from the Lebanese border and the Golan Heights; the kids were amazed to find that a place bristling with weaponry was nonetheless more peaceful and serene than anything they had previously known.

THESE were teen-agers, so they talked less about Israel than about themselves. "The Middle East trip was one of the best things that happened to me personally," said Darian Mobley, who, with a long face beneath a black cap, looked far older than his seventeen years. "I'm the class clown. I never had any kind of goals or priorities. Being out there, on your own, washing your own drawers, getting up for work, helps you a lot. I've become a lot more responsible."



One of the people who had gathered to hear the students was Chaya Degan, a short middle-aged woman with long, straight dark hair and a perpetual smile. Degan, by coincidence, had come from the kibbutz to see her daughter graduate from Queens College. When the program's associate director, Ayala Donchin, introduced her, Mike, who had had to be coaxed into speaking, shouted, "She's my grandmother!" The kids had begun to loosen up, and were laughing and goofing around, but when Degan began to speak, in Hebrew, they fell silent. No teacher could even aspire to such reverent attention. All Degan said was that the kibbutzniks had learned as much from the kids as vice versa, but it was as if her smile, and her Hebrew, had taken them for a moment to Israel, where they all wanted to be.

After Degan spoke, the kids talked about the sense of disorientation that had accompanied their return, eleven days earlier. They had been transformed: the world was now divided into the few who understood and the many who didn't, and didn't care. Milky said, "It's like 'How was Israel? All right, I'll see you later.' " And then there would be the usual talk about drug-dealer boyfriends going off to jail. "I don't need to hear it," Milky said.

Later, the kids dispersed, and Ayala Donchin sat on a desk and talked about the "youth-services program," a support network for the returnees. It seemed to consist mostly of a friendly ear. Jonell Quinones recalled the time that one of the kids hurt his hand playing basketball, and Jonell's friend Nir, one of the kibbutzniks, shook off sleep, commandeered a car, and drove him to a distant hospital. And it wasn't just Nir—others helped, too. "They didn't have to do that," Jonell said, with a wondering look. "They wouldn't do it here."

COSTA-GAVRAS STRIKES A MATCH

ABOUT seven-eighths of the way through Costa-Gavras's new film, "A Minor Apocalypse," which will be receiving its New York première this week at the Human Rights Watch International Film Festival, at Lincoln Center, you may find yourself starting to feel really sorry for the folks on the festival's steering committee, who chose this, of all moments, as the occasion on which to bestow their first annual Irene Diamond Lifetime Achievement Award on the Greek-French filmmaker. Not that Costa-Gavras, whose consistently passionate and hard-hitting work includes such engagé classics as "Z," "State of Siege," and "Missing," wouldn't seem a self-evident choice for such an honor. It's just that with this latest film—or, anyway, through well over seven-eighths of it—Costa-Gavras seems to have kissed off that entire œuvre, along with all the principled commitments that once appeared to undergird it. And, furthermore, he seems to have had a wickedly good time doing so.

The film is based on the Polish writer

and director Tadeusz Konwicki's bleak 1979 novel dissecting his country's pre-Solidarity malaise. A disturbing satire, even in its own context, it's about a disaffected writer whose friends one day start egging him on to set himself ablaze in front of the Party's Central Committee building, in one glorious final act of protest.

Costa-Gavras bought the rights to Konwicki's novel more than ten years ago, when Poland was under martial law. Necessity bred the clever invention of shifting the action to Paris and setting it in the Polish émigré community there. Costa-Gavras and his co-scenarist, Jean-Claude Grumberg, had barely finished their screenplay, however, when the Berlin Wall came crashing down. "At first, we figured that that was it, we'd simply have to abandon the whole project," Costa-Gavras said last week. "But within six months we came to see that, no, in fact, in all sorts of ways nothing had really changed. And, anyway, the story was no longer so much about our Eastern European guests as about us, their hosts, who had for so long fetishized their saintly, inspiring presence in our midst but had now taken to grumbling about when were they going to be going home already."

And, indeed, the story had transmogrified into a ferociously canny evisceration of the aging, menopausal Parisian generation of 1968—bored, wasted, their ideals not so much shattered as simply depleted, their high-flown youthful aspirations vaporized into so much Mitterrandian hot air. It is these muddleheaded pseudosocialists who now start seeking to recover their own past glory (and, inevitably, a good chunk of material profit as well) by pressuring their hapless Polish guest, Stan, into igniting himself in righteous protest at a rally at the Vatican. (Stan—a clumsy writer played to nebby perfection by Jiří Menzel, the Czech director whose film "Closely Watched Trains" was one of the masterpieces of the Prague sixties—had made such a botch of the simple act of changing a dangling light bulb that his friends were convinced he was trying to commit suicide.) In fact, it's only at the last moment, in St. Peter's Square itself, that Costa-Gavras, with sly relish, turns his story completely inside out—if only for a split second, the time it takes to strike a match, or two, or three—thereby revealing himself to be just as passionately and authentically devoted to those ideals as ever.

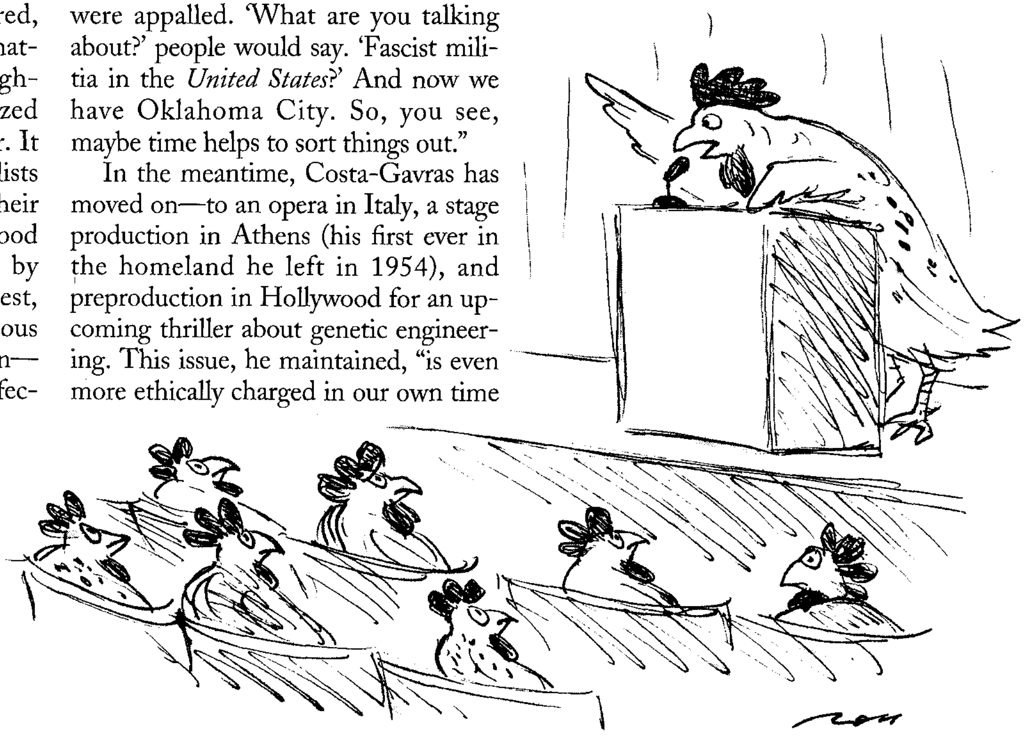
This last bit of thematic shape-shifting is so startlingly unexpected that many Parisians simply refused to see it at all. Misconstruing Costa-Gavras's ultimate gesture as drastically as their cinematic counterparts misconstrue Stan's attempt to change that damn light bulb, the French left turned angrily on the expatriate director, savaging his film. The right, for its part—as embodied, for instance, in a rave review in *Le Figaro*—triumphantly drew both the film and its maker into a self-satisfied embrace, in yet another neoconservative wet dream of latter-day conversion. And this reaction, of course, only further appalled the leftist critics and confirmed their sourest convictions.

Costa-Gavras seemed equally bemused by both reactions. "This kind of thing happens," he commented. "This certainly wasn't the first time. I remember back in 1988 when I released my film 'Betrayed'—American audiences were appalled. 'What are you talking about?' people would say. 'Fascist militia in the *United States*?' And now we have Oklahoma City. So, you see, maybe time helps to sort things out."

In the meantime, Costa-Gavras has moved on—to an opera in Italy, a stage production in Athens (his first ever in the homeland he left in 1954), and preproduction in Hollywood for an upcoming thriller about genetic engineering. This issue, he maintained, "is even more ethically charged in our own time than the nuclear question ever was, if only people would open their eyes." (So much for any flagging of his political intensity.) This week, he'll be racing through New York as well—in part, no doubt, to gauge what the Lincoln Center audiences make of his tart, combustible concoction.

MIRACLE ON 42ND STREET

SOMETIMES it happens that a single improvement to the fabric of a city will alter not only the nature of the neighborhood in which the improvement takes place but also, and unexpectedly, the nature of the city as a whole. A transformation of this sort has just occurred here with the opening of a restaurant and open-air café at the east end of Bryant Park, immediately behind the New York Public Library. The restaurant, called the Bryant Park Grill, occupies an exceptionally attractive latticed pavilion to the south of the canopied bronze statue of William Cullen Bryant, long a familiar feature of the park and now newly restored. The B. P. Café occupies the space between the pavilion and West Fortieth Street and also a much larger space between the Bryant statue and West Forty-second Street; patrons sit at tables under the leafy



"Don't you see—we could all be free-range!"

branches of a grove of robust old plane trees, or at a couple of bars tucked beneath pretty, green-striped tents. From both the pavilion and the café one looks out over the greensward of Bryant Park to a fountain splashing at the Sixth Avenue end of the park.

For the first time ever on so big a scale, café life in the open air has been introduced into the shadowy canyons of our skyscraper city. The central lawn of Bryant Park, with scores of people seated in chairs or sprawled upon the grass; the allées of speckled-with-sunlight trees rising on either side of the lawn; the promenade that extends along a classical Beaux-Arts axis for nearly four hundred feet in front of the café and the pavilion—all these elements combine to strike the note of a belated but highly welcome Parisian Belle Époque, emerging at a moment when New York has seemed fated to stumble from one sorry crisis to the next.

The multiplicity of difficult tasks that had to be undertaken in order to restore the park and make possible its new amenities required some fifteen years to accomplish. Several institutions were involved, most notably the Public Library, the Bryant Park Restoration Corporation, the Parks Department, and the Art Commission. Among the individuals involved were a number of private philanthropists, the architect Hugh Hardy, the landscape architect Laurie Olin, the garden designers Lynden Miller and Mary Riley Smith, and a venturesome restaurateur, Michael Weinstein.

As the head of Ark Restaurants, Weinstein presides over thirty-three restaurants here and in several other cities, including, among his local enterprises, Lutèce, B. Smith's, the Louisiana Community Bar & Grill, and the Museum Cafe, on the Upper West Side, which he founded with friends almost twenty years ago, as a young Wall Street financier.

The interior of the Bryant Park Grill was designed by Weinstein's wife, Nancy Mah, and Cary Tamarkin. The most notable aspect of the design is an eighty-six-foot-long mural by the artist Hunt Slonem, which depicts hundreds of birds huddled together in what one assumes to be a tropical rain forest. Most of the birds appear to be parrots, macaws, toucans, and the like—representatives of dozens of birds that share the loft-studio on East Houston Street where Slonem can often be found painting away with a bird or two perched on his shoulders, or even on his head. "My birds are not only birds," he said. "They also represent souls, though I wouldn't go so far as to say whose. In any event, I count on their being happy in Bryant Park."

LENNY LIVES . . .

JOHN SCHREIBER, co-producer of this month's Toyota Comedy Festival, and Robert Weide, producer of the June 14th Lenny Bruce Celebration at Town Hall, part of said festival, were eleven and seven years old, respectively, when Lenny Bruce—the early free-talking, truth-speaking, disturbing, stubborn, and funny standup comic, who was arrested on charges of obscenity in San Francisco, Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York—died, in 1966, just short of his forty-first birthday. Independently of each other, Schreiber and Weide discovered Lenny Bruce from his records and became his devoted partisans. Weide, who works out of his home, in Bel Air, California, is creating a documentary film about the comic, to be shown at the celebration. Schreiber, busy co-producing (with Alan King and George Wein) more than fifty other components of the ten-day-long festival—including lining up a panel consisting of Lenny Bruce's mother, Lenny Bruce's daughter, Lenny Bruce's lawyer, and some current performers devoted to Lenny Bruce's memory—suddenly asked himself a startling question: "How are we going to bring Lenny Bruce alive when he's dead?" With a little over two weeks of preparation time left, Schreiber flew out to L.A. to see Weide, and then they telephoned Schreiber's talent director, Mark Krantz, in New York, and had a conference call.

"What can we do to explain Lenny Bruce?" Schreiber said to his colleagues. "Most people never saw him, don't even know what he was—what he *is*."

"The Marx Brothers were dead, W. C. Fields was dead, but I made documentaries about *them*," Weide said.

"You had all the movie stuff, even a lot of TV stuff, about the Marx Brothers and about W. C. Fields," Krantz said. "And everybody knew who they were. What stuff do we have about Lenny?"

"Lenny wasn't on TV much—he wasn't *permitted* to be on," Weide said. "But I found this great segment, rare stuff from an old 'Steve Allen Show' in 1964 that was censored. It was never shown. We'll show it for the first time."

"All those arrests that he went through. And we'll have to mention the drug thing," Schreiber said.

"He was set up in the drug thing," Weide said. "He died of an overdose of some very strong morphine. It wasn't even heroin. There's speculation that people gave the morphine to someone who they knew would give it to Lenny. He didn't even know what he was taking."

"His wife, Honey, remarried and is living in Hawaii," Schreiber said. "She can't come, but his mother, Sally Marr, is coming. She's eighty-eight. She was one of the earliest of the women standup comics. Lenny used to come to watch her when he was on leave from the Navy, during the Second World War."

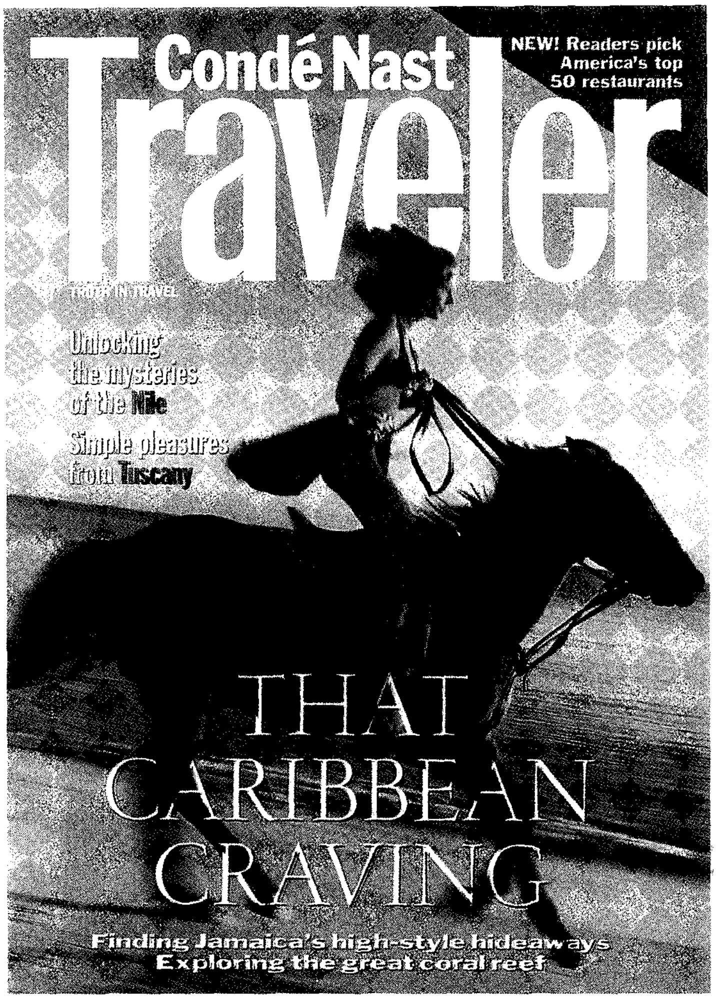
"His mother likes to tell how when she saw his name on the Strand marquee she cried," Weide said.

"I want the panel to be very natural, very conversational," Schreiber said. "His daughter, Kitty, has been a singer. She's still a singer, even though she's now a nurse. But if she sings it will be charming. It will make a nice moment. What was Lenny's favorite song?"

" 'Somewhere There's a Place for Us,' " Weide said. "Kitty will sing it. Lenny will materialize." ♦

This week's contributors: Hilton Als, James Traub, Lawrence Weschler, Brendan Gill, Lillian Ross.

PURE PLEASURE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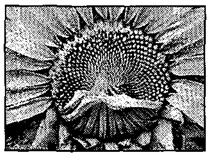

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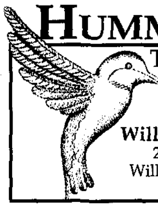

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DOWNTOWN CHRONICLES

SUDDEN DEF

While Republicans are getting their gangsta sound bites, rappers and poets are handling the controversy in their own way.

BY HENRY LOUIS GATES, JR.

It's a little past nine o'clock at S.O.B.'s, a club on Varick Street at the edge of SoHo, when Bob Holman takes the stage. He's dressed in a green paisley shirt, navy-blue corduroys, a plaid vest, and a black stingy-brim hat; his ice-blue Appalachian eyes glint through horn-rimmed glasses, which complement his salt-and-pepper beard. "How about a nice round of applause for no reason whatsoever?" he says to a crowd of maybe three hundred and fifty people. Among the people applauding for no reason whatsoever is Holman's partner, Bill Adler, who has been spinning records for the past hour like an experienced d.j. A d.j., in fact, is one of the things he used to be. One of the things he is now is co-creator, with Holman, of the whole scene that's about to unfold.

The crowd at S.O.B.'s is mostly black and mostly standing. Look around, and you see a catalogue of contemporary b-boy styles: the obligatory baseball hats, chains, and oversized jeans that hang low on narrow waists. There are a fair number of smooth-shaven heads, a scattering of superfluous sunglasses, and just a few youths with gold caps on their teeth—"gold fronts." The women wear their hair short, Grace Jones style, or in dreadlocks, or processed into synthetic plumage. In the back, someone's passing around a blunt, and its resinous fragrance wafts through the area. In the next couple of hours, the audience will be rowdily cheering on the performers; we could be at an evening of Martin Lawrence doing standup, or KRS-One giving a rap concert. Actually, we're at a poetry reading.

Over the next several hours, performers who have made their names on poetry circuits, along with those who identify themselves primarily as rappers, will step up to the microphone and recite their work. And though it's still early, Bob Holman, the postmodern promoter who has done more to bring poetry to cafés and bars than anyone since Ferlinghetti, looks pleased: pleased at the crowd, pleased at the energy level of the performers, pleased at what he and Adler have brought about in the past two years, which is a scene—or is it a movement?—familiarly known as "rap meets poetry."

At a time when the likes of William Bennett and Robert Dole find political advantage in pronouncing on the menace of rap lyrics, you can feel that you've stumbled into a realm that shouldn't, by rights, exist. There's a lot that rap's adversaries would recognize here, of course: the hip-hop styles, the hardcore poses—the whole iconography of the Scary Negro, in its 1995 edition. And yet, in spaces like this one, such elements exist alongside their opposites. So it's an incongruous scene, where old-school misogynists mix it up with radical feminists, where Tupac clones compete with Queer activists, where performers whose guiding inspiration is "Superfly" meet poets who dedicate their work to Anne Sexton. Those who have been trained to think of rap as essentially a criminal subculture may find it bewildering to find it appearing as a literary subculture. These days, politicians wage culture wars the way they used to kiss babies—it's their way of reaching out to the heartland. But though the scene that Holman and Adler have created is remote from the world of Beltway strategists, you can find a culture war here, too—and one of far greater intricacy.

Not that there aren't important commonalities among the participants. Rawness and immediacy are hallmarks of what happens here, along with a profound distrust of bookish gentility, and maybe an excessive suspicion of a poetics of indirection. Paul Beatty, one of the most celebrated of the artists, says of the demand to "write more universally":

> does that mean write more white
> drink tea in the morning
> write about flowers n lust and
>   poeticize the dust in the light rays

Neither the rap-influenced poets nor the rappers whom they, in turn, influence have much to say about the glitter of dust motes, and maybe that's their loss. But they have other things on their minds.

Joining Holman as master of ceremonies at S.O.B.'s is Bonz (that's pronounced "Bones") Malone, who is wearing a yellow rain slicker over a red turtleneck and has stuffed his baggy jeans into Timberland boots. He's introducing the first "spoken word" performer of the evening—Sexy Seventeen, as he styles himself. Seventeen has a day job as a member of a rap group called the Cut Throats. He is tall and willowy, and—though it's hard to be sure, since he wears his hat with the visor angled down over his eyes—he appears to be crying. "Yo, Seventeen, why you crying, man?" Bonz asks. Seventeen replies by declaiming, in something of a wail, "I remember when I was small. / Black Billy took my basketball. / I was running from the park / shooting hoops after dark / because I thought I heard my mommy call / And this truck pulled up on the corner. / It was Billy screaming, yo nigger give me a quarter. / I said I can't stop and play. / Billy stepped in my way / And pimp-slapped me like I was his daughter." So begins a first-person ghetto ballad about an eight-year-old who settles scores with the neighborhood bully. "I'm crying, because when I killed that nigger, my life was full of trauma," he eventually explains. I don't see it making the Norton Anthology, but it has a certain vigor, and the crowd cheers and whistles its approval.

At readings, performers whose guiding inspiration is "Superfly" mix it up with poets who dedicate their work to Anne Sexton.

FILIP PAGOWSKI

In some ways, Holman—this forty-six-year-old white guy with the ice-blue eyes—is an unlikely godfather to the rap-meets-poetry scene. Then again, in some ways it's an unlikely scene. What you can't miss about him is an almost unnerving intensity in the way he talks—a sense of proselytizing zeal. He could be an early Christian or an emissary from the Unification Church, except that the intensity is continually undercut by a current of jokiness—it's as if David Letterman had got religion. Holman says he's a poetry addict; and one measure of the scope of his poetic interests is to be found in the fact that he's putting together a five-part series for PBS called "The United States of Poetry." Presumably, the pros and cons of being a poetry impresario was not something he discussed with his high-school career counsellor. But, if it's hard to imagine anybody doing what he does, it's hard to imagine him doing anything else. He remembers writing his first poem, when he was in third grade. It was called "George Washington Followed Indian Trails." "I took it up to the teacher, and she said, 'Oh, this is a wonderful poem. Where did you copy it from?'" He describes his father—"the only Jew in Harlan County, Kentucky," he likes to say—as a dreamer, with an uncertain grasp of reality; in the late nineteen-forties, his father took out a license to open an amusement park in Florida. It didn't pan out, and he committed suicide when Holman was two.

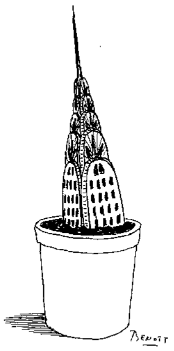
Holman, having devoted his life to the promotion of poetry, also has to be accounted a dreamer; he's just had a better time of it. Though he sets little store by formal education, he did study with the poet Kenneth Koch at Columbia University, where he spent the last four years of the nineteen-sixties—just in time for Ginsberg and "The Strawberry Statement." Since 1989, he, along with the estimable Miguel Algarín, has run the latest incarnation of the Nuyorican Poets Cafe, on the Lower East Side (Loisaida)—a center for spoken-word performers, who sometimes portray themselves as multiethnic successors to the Beat poets of the fifties. The Nuyorican was a place where emerging poets cast imagism into the streets, as in the poet Martín Espada's conjuring of the "apparition of a salsa band" in the Liberty Loan pawnshop window:

Golden trumpet
silver trombone,
congas, maracas, tambourine,
all with price tags
dangling
like the city morgue ticket
on a dead man's toe.

So the spoken-word milieu and its Loisaida haven provided the poetry half of the rap-meets-poetry formula. The other half came out of the hip-hop revolution of the eighties.

One night in the early eighties, Holman was shaking it on the dance floor of the Nuyorican when, he says, "I stopped dead, because I was listening to a poem you could dance to. I was hearing Kurtis Blow's 'The Breaks,' and it was so clear to me that these words were a poem. There was music, but there was no singing. He was talking." And that's when it finally struck him: rap *was* poetry. "The form was a densely rhymed, highly rhythmic, densely verbal construct that played off all the vernaculars." As a lark, Holman made a tape of himself performing his own rap lyrics, and sent it to a rap executive named Bill Adler.

Adler had news for Holman: the Plain White Rapper, as Holman had billed himself, was not going to make the *Billboard* charts. But the two stayed in touch, and the news Holman brought to Adler proved more important in the long run: there was a whole school of gritty, defiant, urban, multicultural—in short, *raplike*—poetry out there, and the folks who were creating it gave readings at places like the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. Why wasn't anybody in the hip-hop industry on to this?



BILL ADLER is currently the president of NuYo Records, a new label that specializes in the spoken-word scene; Holman, Sekou Sundiata, himself an accomplished poet, and Jim Coffman, a music-industry veteran, are partners. At S.O.B.'s tonight, Adler's wearing a T-shirt, black slacks, and black high-tops. Since most hip-hop executives dress something like their talent, that's his business uniform, too. Adler is a rangy six feet two, with brown curly hair and a well-trimmed beard. He's forty-three, and looks maybe a decade younger. His speech is liberally and unself-consciously interlaced with black-English locutions—not just the slang but also the syntax. He'll say of a friend, "I been knowing him," instead of "I've known him for a while." He talks about "kickin' the real" and "kickin' rhymes" and "droppin' science," and never says "on the subject of x" but always "on the x tip." This is the blackest white guy in New York.

In his suite of offices, in Chelsea, Adler bounds around like an overgrown puppy. His gestures are large, and his voice booms. You're sure this is a kid who got in trouble in school for not being quiet in the library. Adler doesn't consider the so-called rap community beyond criticism, but he regards the current Republican crusade as a contrivance. "Those lines are so trite and insincere, I can't take them at face value," he says. "At first, I kept waiting for Dole to crack a smile or wink at the camera. Now I think he's got the best deadpan in the business." Still, as head of a small record company, he's impressed, he says, by William Bennett's strategy of targeting Time Warner; since Time Warner released more than twelve hundred and fifty albums in the past year alone, it's been easy to find an inflammatory handful. "A corporation that big and diversified is a giant with a glass jaw—it's susceptible to a well-aimed right cross. When their guys are talking to congressmen about cable regulations, or satellite licensing, the last thing they need is to be quizzed about some gangsta act. So if you can get them to respond to pressure, you can declare victory. Of course, the reality is that you haven't changed what's in the record bins one iota." And that's because the record trade takes place in a multi-vender marketplace. "Imagine if a modern-day temperance society decided to target Seagram, and got it to sell off its liquor divisions. It might be a way for them to flex muscles, but you know it's not going to stop a soul from drinking. Symbolism aside, it's an easy and meaningless victory."

Adler points out that until several years ago almost all the major rap acts were distributed by independent labels. "It was because these labels were so spectacularly successful that, in the middle and late eighties, the majors began to snatch these labels up—labels like Def Jam, Jive, and Select," he says. Actually, some of the biggest rap acts, like Ice Cube and Run-DMC, are still on independent labels, which don't have to worry about what Dole's constituency thinks. "So if Time Warner gets out of the rap business all that happens is that, say, Priority Records, the biggest independent rap label, gets even bigger." Adler shrugs. "Rap itself, in all its flavors, isn't going anywhere."

From the way Adler talks about his initiation into the rap world, you can tell it was something of a conversion experience. In 1983, when he was freelancing for *People*, *Rolling Stone*, and the *Village Voice*, he spent a night hanging out with Russell Simmons, who even then was the grand impresario of the hip-hop nation, or what would soon become it. Simmons took him all over the city—downtown clubs, uptown clubs, black gay clubs, white gay clubs, and a place called Disco Fever, on Jerome Avenue, in the Bronx. Despite its name, Disco Fever was an early outpost of the hip-hop revolution—it had its own house d.j.s and house m.c.s—and, musically speaking, Adler became a postulant. The next year, at Simmons's prompting, he became the publicist for the company Simmons was starting, Rush Artists Management. Adler tells me, "Russell, you have to remember, was a sociology student when he was at City College, and he was very attuned to the sociology of black music. He said to me, 'Look, the most popular representation of Afro-American life right now is Bill Cosby. That's an ideal; mine's the reality. If you're black, you're more likely to live next to LL Cool J than to Dr. Huxtable. My artists are authentic, they're black, and they *must be heard*.' The point was that the music doesn't have to be explicitly political to be political in effect—that just to be funky was political. As George Clinton will tell you, funk is a way of life. Free your mind and your ass will follow."

You don't have to talk to Adler long before you figure out that the sixties are very much with him; as far as he's concerned, the ideals of those years still seem fresh, and he's surprised to learn that others don't share them. "Getting paid" is how rap artists talk about Mammon: when they want to sound practical and worldly, they say they want to make sure they get paid; when they want to sound idealistic, they say that for them it isn't about gettin' paid. Adler's clients—and the list reads like a *Who's Who* of contemporary rap—will tell you that getting paid isn't what Adler is about. Since his father was a corporate accountant and accountancy is the science of payment, you might say there's an element of rebellion in that. Still, I'm not sure how to respond when he tells me, in hushed, disapproving tones, about a major player in the music industry who he thinks might be in it only for the money. "A pure soul" is how Danny Goldberg, the chairman of Warner Bros. Records and himself something of a mensch, describes Adler. As Goldberg puts it, "most people in our business have a higher degree of cynicism." The baffling thing is that Adler has spent a decade in one of the sleaziest businesses in the world—the music industry, and then *publicity*, no less—and he doesn't quite understand man's fallen state. You figure out, finally, that there's something missing in him, something you wish were missing in everybody else. He's the hard-bitten ingénue, the world-weary naïf.

HOLMAN pinpoints the emergence of the rap-meets-poetry phenomenon to the day when Bill Adler brought the San Francisco rapper Michael Franti, then one of his clients, to the Nuyorican Poets Cafe. The year was 1992. "It was the first time those worlds had collided," Holman says. Franti listened to the poets for a while, realized he was among kindred souls, then got up and read some of his rap lyrics. He received an ovation. In January of 1993, Adler and Holman decided to start a series at the Fez—the basement club at the Time Café, on Lafayette Street—that would bring rappers and spoken-word poets together and so challenge the idea that there was a real distinction between the two. Though everybody knows the series as Rap Meets Poetry, it's officially called The Ayatollah's Granola—in homage to what Holman considers an especially brilliant rhyme in LL Cool J's œuvre. There are also "poetry slams," done in a sort of jokey Olympic-contest style, where spoken-word artists are rated on a scale from 0 (for "a poem that should never have been written," in Holman's gloss) to 10 (for "a poem inducing mutual simultaneous orgasm"). These take place regularly at the Nuyorican, and they are becoming increasingly popular across the country. When, in 1985, Holman met LL Cool J—Adler introduced the two—and Holman told him that rhyming "Ayatollah" and "granola" made him Poet of the Year, LL flinched and replied that the word "poet" was financial poison. "Now cut to 1994," Holman says. "You will find—with, for example, Digable Planets and De La Soul and Arrested Development as well as Michael Franti—rappers who can claim to be poets. This kind of poetry can be the new rock and roll. Kids can throw it back in their parents' faces: 'I'm going to a poetry reading, Ma!' "

All of which leaves a nagging question unresolved: *Is* rap necessarily poetry? Isn't it enough that rap is—well, rap? Consider how unlikely the whole concept of "the hip-hop nation" seems. The inner cities are (as seen on TV) places of poverty, gunfire, crack, and despair. They're also places whose denizens, many of them, have trained themselves in the linguistic conventions of rap. Leonard Bernstein, in a radio lecture, famously showed that the standard blues lyrics could be parsed as pentameter, often even iambic pentameter. Bessie Smith, it turned out, was operating within the same prosodic system as, say, Shakespeare (which Bernstein demonstrated by singing lines from "Macbeth"). Most rap lyrics can be scanned as tetrameter, allowing for a lot of syllabic compression between those four stressed beats. But how is it that rhyming, an activity that was discarded as too effete by a generation of wan modernists, has now been taken up by b-boys with Kangol caps? How is it that large swaths of the urban underclass spend time spitfiring patter rhymes with the fleet regularity traditionally associated with the D'Oyly Carte Opera Company?

The British critic A. A. Gill, who recently stumbled on a few regulars of the scene, told readers of the London *Sunday Times* that "the *really* great thing" was that their work "was so free: free of library shelves, free of a history, free of a heritage, free of the tramp of iambic feet." When it comes to poetry, I happen to think that freedom is overrated; and I'm not so sure that the hip-hop poets are all that free, anyway. For one thing, there are rich traditions of black orality that undergird this sort of thing. Among them are the kinds of verbal jousting that go by such names as "toasts," "playing the dozens," and "signifying"—and an often risqué legacy of rhymed storytelling.

My father used to tell me that he met black folk in the Army during the Second World War who couldn't read or write but could recite fifty verses of "Shine and the Titanic," undoubtedly the most popular poem in the black vernacular. In this version of events, the sole survivor of the Titanic is a black menial referred to as Shine, who turns out to be a champion swimmer. The other passengers plead with him for help—offer him wealth, fame, sex—but to no avail. "And Shine swam on" is the refrain. (A typical stanza: " 'Shine, Shine, save poor me! / I'll give you all the pussy a Shine can see.' / Shine says, 'Now pussy's good, but pussy don't last— / Shine's gonna save his own black ass.' And Shine swam on.") Rap itself has an illustrious prehistory in black popular music. You could point to James Brown and his rapped eleven-minute rendition of "Lost Someone," which he performed live at the Apollo Theatre in 1962, or to Isaac Hayes, who—especially in his breakaway album, "Hot Buttered Soul," in 1969—raised rapped lyrics to new prominence as a style of performance. In the late sixties and early seventies, performers such as The Last Poets, Stanley Crouch ("Ain't No Ambulances for No Nigguhs Tonight"), and Gil Scott-Heron ("The Revolution Will Not Be Televised") employed a combination of rhythm, melody, and the spoken word. They wouldn't necessarily recognize their progeny.

SOON after Adler and Holman launched the rap-meets-poetry series at the Fez, MTV decided to get into the act. Adler talks about what happened with a mixture of amusement and chagrin: "MTV pounced immediately and started

WILL HE KNOW WHAT THIS IS REGARDING?
BEK

cherry-picking our artists, the ones we were showcasing as part of the series." These were poets with names like Maggie Estep and Reg E. Gaines and Ninety-9. First, MTV started running thirty-second spots called "Fightin' Wordz," which were, in effect, poetry videos. That led to a second series, and then to a tour under the slogan Free Your Mind. "A pure P.R. stunt," Bill Adler says. "They took a look at this scene that looked marvellously integrated, a model of racial harmony and tolerance, and decided to put it on the road, so they could point to a social conscience the next time they got flak for something." This was followed by a pair of spoken-word specials—produced by Bob Smalls, the independent producer who invented the "Unplugged" format on MTV. Poets performed their poetry in a faux café setting, complete with lit cigarettes. "They spent more money building that set than it cost to build the Nuyorican itself," Holman tells me, with some disgust. In February and March of 1994, the Free Your Mind tour played twenty dates. "Soon after we started the series at the Fez, there was so much buzz among the labels that I decided to start one of our own," Adler says.

By now, the phenomenon has become so well established that people have started rhyming about the scene itself. You can see why Holman likes to invoke "the MTV-ization of poetry, and the poeticization of MTV." Tracie Morris, one of the stars of the poetry-slam circuit, has a piece she calls "The Scene (Snake in the Fez Pit)," and it's about the way people who don't have talent rip off people who do. She rap-rhymes, "Could be music, rap, or spoken word / Don't play yourself; it's absurd. . . . / Anybody with a new style—hey, I'm after their flavor / Too lazy to think up my own shit / Plus might help me get paid, yo. . . . / Desperation is my name / Never ending quest for the fame." Holman and Adler love it. It kills them.

Back at S.O.B.'s, a young woman with dreads and glasses steps up to the mike. Her name is Sha-Key. She talks about the "boom poetic." Her performance is mesmerizing—there's the cool intensity of her voice, the hypnotic rhymes and pulsing beat. Later, I look at a transcript of her performance, and I feel like a dyslexic looking at a page of "Finnegans Wake": "I drop in with a pinch of sin / I cannot be told who the hell I been. / Across the seas / The black bleeds, makes me understand these rules and regulations / Of the liquidations . . ." Maybe you had to be there. Those of us who *are* there applaud warmly.

Talk to Sha-Key afterward and you'll learn that she thinks of herself as a rapper more than as a poet. But that makes her a good example of the sorts of people who are creating the scene—it's what distinguishes the rap-meets-poetry phenomenon from the spoken-word circles it emerged from. Sha-Key was born in 1971 in the Bronx, and grew up in the projects of West Yonkers as a latchkey kid from the age of six or seven. "So I had a lot of time to write," she says. "I had my imaginary friend, I had my own little world within the apartment." She was an m.c. before she began writing poetry. "I had entered the poetry scene when my brother was killed, in '93." By her reckoning, that made her an early entry on the scene, somebody who was in on it "before it started to blow up." She talks about head-nodders, meaning hip-hoppers, as her core constituency. Still, she says that her forte isn't freestyle—that she's best when she puts pen to paper. Hip-hop, in her view, provides a model for a new poetics. "Hip-hop is fusion. Name a thing, you can fuse it. You can use opera, you can use a waterfall." And, of course, through "sampling," you can help yourself to a whole library of popular music. It's a technique of audio collage that has long since passed beyond the circuits of hip-hop. Meanwhile, Sha-Key worries, popular hip-hop is regressing. "Either they want you to sound like this person or that, or they want their music to be eight bars, four bars, eight bars, four bars—very singsongy. Easy for you to digest, so it'll sell." And she worries about the spoken-word scene getting commercialized in the same way: "Once something is commercialized, people like to drain it for what it's worth and then toss it to the side. That's American culture, but that's sad. So I'm wary of anything that gets too popular—even myself, to an extent."

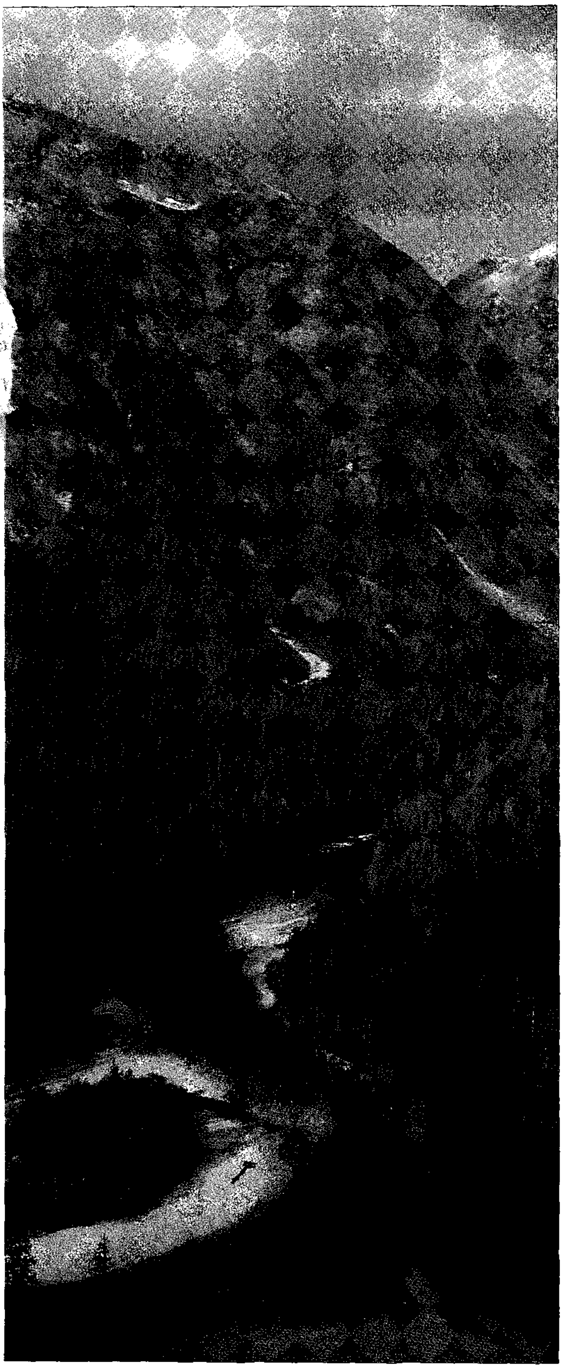
Tonight, she's reciting, "Why deny / That your tongue runs dry / When you tell a lie?" Bonz says we have to give it up to Sha-Key and we do.

"Excellent, but not fit for a king."

EVEN if you're skeptical about the "boom poetic," you may wonder whether the new rap-meets-poetry scene isn't an oasis of sorts in a less than verdant poetic landscape. I talk to the legendary Amiri Baraka, né Leroi Jones, who in the sixties and early seventies emerged as the leading poet and spokesman of the Black Arts movement; I want to know what *he* makes of the new scene. Many of the rap and spoken-word artists I've talked to have men-

CONGRATULATIONS BRITISH COLUMBIA

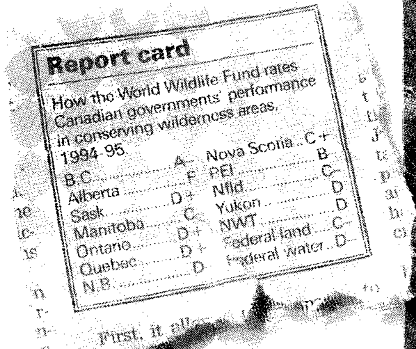
Canadian Province Scores Top Marks in World Wildlife Fund's Environmental Report.



Kitlope Valley Rainforest

British Columbia has Canada's best record for wilderness preservation.

The world's largest conservation group awarded the status this spring, when it granted B.C. the highest grade ever achieved on its annual "Endangered Spaces" report card.



Report card

How the World Wildlife Fund rates Canadian governments' performance in conserving wilderness areas, 1994-95.

B.C.	A-	Nova Scotia	C+
Alberta	F	PEI	B
Sask	D+	Nfld	C-
Manitoba	C	Yukon	D
Ontario	D+	NWT	D
Quebec	D+	Federal land	C-
N.B.	D	Federal water	D

Globe and Mail
April 20, 1995

The World Wildlife Fund was responding to the creation of more than 100 new wilderness parks in B.C. since 1992, comprising an area larger than the state of Maryland.

Protected areas in B.C. now exceed the combined national and state parks of California, Oregon, Washington, Idaho, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Wyoming, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Nebraska, Colorado, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Kansas, Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota and Wisconsin.

An even larger expanse of wilderness is under moratorium in B.C., as the government works toward its goal of doubling the provincial park system by the year 2000.

Recent additions to B.C.'s protected area network include:

- The Tatshenshini-Alsek – a 2.5 million acre river drainage (twice the size of the Grand Canyon) recognized in 1994 as a United Nations World Heritage Site;
- The Khutzeymateen Valley – a 111,000 acre coastal reserve and Canada's first grizzly bear sanctuary;
- 23 new parks on Vancouver Island – primarily old growth temperate rainforest watersheds;
- The Kitlope Valley – at 784,000 acres, the world's largest protected tract of old growth temperate rainforest.

B.C.'s forest sector supports the program to double protected areas in the province. In fact, preservation of the Kitlope Valley was made possible by one company's voluntary decision to relinquish harvesting rights in the area without compensation.

And where British Columbia forests are managed for timber, the law requires that native species trees remain the dominant landscape feature. That means forest land will cover two-thirds of B.C. forever.

Forests are B.C.'s most precious resource. Come see them for yourself.

For more information about B.C. forests, contact the Forest Alliance of British Columbia – a non-profit citizens organization committed to sustainable development and healthy forests for future generations.

Please send me more information about B.C.'s parks and forests, and the forest sector's efforts to preserve wilderness and wildlife habitat.

NAME ____________________

ADDRESS ____________________

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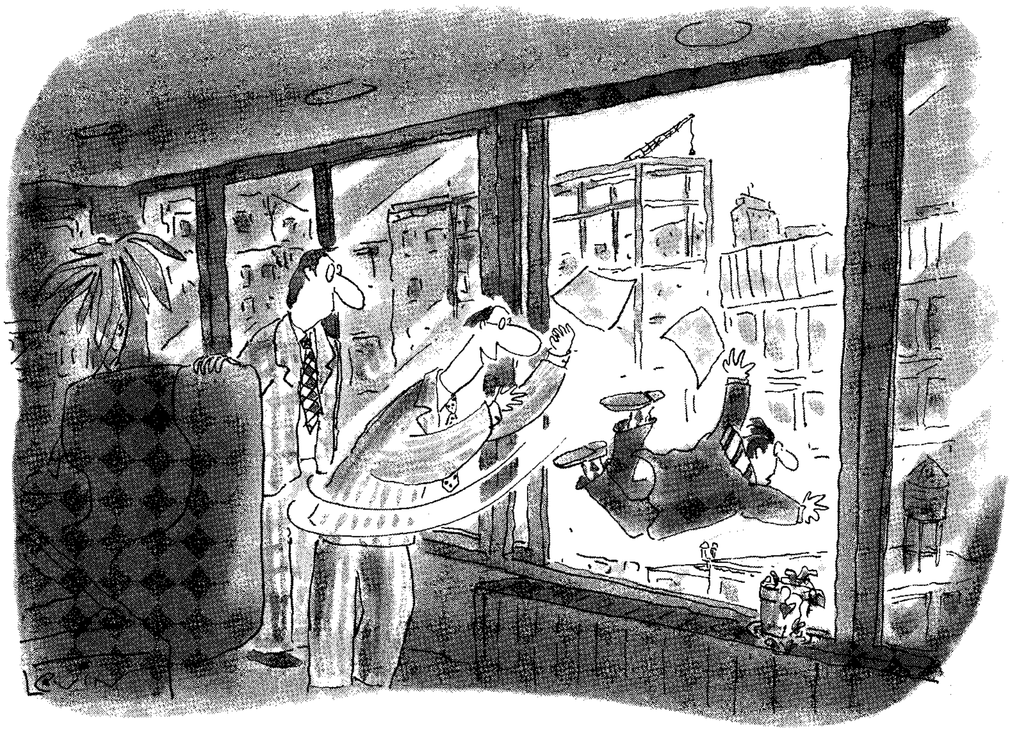
FOREST ALLIANCE OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

P.O. Box 49312, 1055 Dunsmuir St.,
Vancouver, B.C., Canada V7X 1L3
1-800-567-TREE. *Fax* (604) 685-5373
Telnet <<199.60.121.1>>
Modem (604) 685-5165



"See? This is why I get the big bucks."

• •

tioned him as an inspiration, so I'm surprised to learn that he vehemently disapproves of it. "I have an appreciation of rap, based on its origins and its early direction and the political defiance it used to have," he says. "It was a continuation of the Black Arts movement. But since the corporations have coöpted it they have substituted gangster thuggery for political defiance. This is always the form used in low commercialism—the substitution of titillation for political content." Such are the cultural contradictions of capitalism that Baraka's Marxian scruples can sound like William Bennett's politics of virtue. And the slams especially arouse Baraka's contempt: "I don't have much use for them because they make the poetry a carnival—the equivalent of a strong-man act. They will do to the poetry movement what they did to rap: give it a quick shot in the butt and elevate it to commercial showiness, emphasizing the most backward elements." A word he uses, "carnival," stays with me. There *is* an aspect of the carnival about these rap-meets-poetry evenings. It's what I like most about them. Raucous though they can be, an unstable mélange of the supposedly regressive and the supposedly enlightened is what provides a lot of the energy.

Allen Ginsberg—another figure often invoked by hip-hop poets—proves to be more enthusiastic about the scene. He reminds me that he himself recorded a pair of raps with the drummer Elvin Jones in 1984. "This poetry is more spontaneous than Beat poetry was, more oral. Its roots are double. One tradition is very ancient: its roots are in vernacular fables, like those of the Signifying Monkey, in rapping, and in 'stylin' out.' The double and triple rhyming in rap poetry is not new; it's part of the black tradition. The other tradition it resonates with is white, and it's related to the poetics of John Skelton, the fifteenth-century English poet, who used double and triple rhyme schemes in abusive poems. 'The Tunning of Eleanor Rumming' is a good example. Rap poetry, then, evokes a very ancient, classical style, the style of toasts and boasts—hyperbole, exaggeration, the exchange of insults on a verbal, symbolic level that's used to siphon off aggression and to make political statements. It's important to remember that the humorless one always loses in the contest of bards represented in signifying."

As literary history, all this sounds pretty exalted, but Ginsberg is genuinely hopeful about the scene's potential. "The spoken-word movement comes out of the Beats, but with rhyme added," he continues. "This movement is a great thing: the human voice returns, words return, nimble speech returns, nimble wit and rhyming return. The movement is like a compost for poetry. It serves to cultivate an interest in the art by cultivating a great audience—an audience of amateur practitioners."

Ginsberg's horticultural metaphor of compost strikes me as suggestive, usefully permissive, generous in all the right ways. It doesn't go down so well with Bob Holman, who smiles sweetly and says, "Compost? I don't know. That sounds like 'shit' to me." And, of course, some of it is.

AFTER a musical interlude at S.O.B.'s, we get Coolly Kim, of the rap group called the UMCs. "We're not going to have an art till you-all niggers start recognizing it as an art, man," he tells us. Then he dives into his own material, which largely concerns his evidently extraordinary virility. Coolly Kim's roots are in hardcore rap, rather than in the spoken-word scene, and it shows. His recitation does not go down entirely well. There are hecklers, and there are those who chastise them. But Holman, unfazed, says, "We need more hecklers in this joint." Holman himself doesn't have an atom of the heckler in him. He won't even heckle the hecklers. He will concede, if he's forced to, that some poetry is better than other poetry, but for him the point is that it's all poetry and poetry is a *good thing*. He's almost eerily nonjudgmental. Still, you get the idea that Coolly Kim's rhymes aren't precisely what Holman considers the apex of the art.

More to the point, as you learn at moments like this, the scene sometimes isn't so much rap meets poetry as rap *versus* poetry. Adler has a clear sense of the fissures here. He says, "Poets are from Venus; rappers are from Mars. We're trying to bring them together on a neutral planet. When we started doing this, I had bought Holman's whole spiel about how rap *is* poetry. I imagined that the showcasing of people from these two different disciplines would be entirely harmonious, that it would demonstrate that hype. Instead, there were collisions—collisions that made me cringe, that frightened me. But Holman delighted in the collisions, and he taught me to love them. The poetry scene is a crucible of p.c., whereas the rap scene can sound pretty benighted, in the sense that there's a lot of damaging color-consciousness, women are hoes and bitches, men are pimps or niggers. It's very ghettocentric. And I think that the collisions became one of the most talked-about elements of the series."

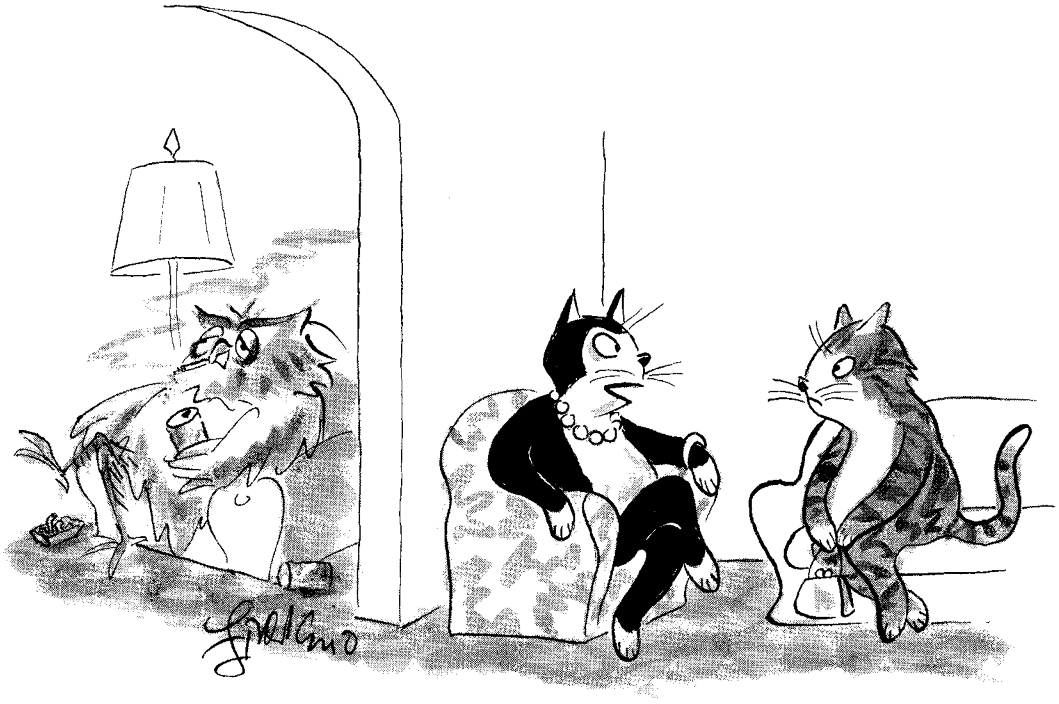
One of these collisions involved a hardcore rapper named Essence Donn. In the spring of 1993, he came to a rap-meets-poetry event for the first time. Holman says that Essence had been unsure whether to read, but "when he saw the kind of audience reaction that was coming down when these other people were reading, he allowed that he would kick one of his old-school rhymes." It was a piece called "Bitch 4 Sale." Holman recalls the night as one when "we had a collection of divas, of powerhouse young women poets—Tracie Morris, Dana Bryant, and Bahiyyih Watson were on the bill." "Bitch 4 Sale" was narrated from the point of view of a pimp trying to turn a woman into a whore: "Yo, I got a plan for that bitch in the tight shit—/She gonna make a nigga some money to grip." During the reading, storms of outrage broke, but they sounded at first like call-and-response enthusiasm. Holman says, "It wasn't until Bahiyyih Watson—still chafing at a *Times* article that quoted her poetry without mentioning her name—began to break the rhythm and allow the meaning of the hecklers to sound out that Essence realized what was going down."

Watson still sounds angry when she talks about that evening. "During his entire performance, he kept repeating the words 'bitch' and 'pussy' and expressions like 'fuck her,' " she tells me. "It was infuriating. I couldn't just blindly accept this—it gets to you. I was standing on a chair watching him perform, eye level with him. So when he finished his routine I was in the perfect spot for an exchange. I asked him straight out—I shouted—did he have a problem with his mother? Then I suggested that he needed a therapist. He told me to shut up, that I didn't know what I was talking about. 'This is my thing, I'm a man'—that kind of tired line. So I responded that if he was *really* a man he'd be taking on racism, sexism, and politics in his work, and would *not* be beating on sisters." Essence Donn didn't know what hit him, Holman says. "Here, in the center of what he thought he had created, he discovered that he was a fossil."

As far as Essence Donn is concerned, "it was a *poem.*" He explains, "The poem's persona was speaking from the point of view of a peer—on that level. I was never out to blatantly disrespect our people." He sounds a little defensive about the episode, but he has since appeared at other rap-meets-poetry events, and people say that they detect a change in him—that they haven't been hearing any odes to pimping lately. "Nobody's nervous about talking back to the rappers here," Adler emphasizes. "There's a lot of criticism and a lot of thoughtfulness. In its way, the rap-meets-poetry scene is a tempering zone. But the criticism you find here is eye to eye—it isn't sniper fire from on high, which is what Dole, Bennett, and company are offering. And that makes all the difference in the world."

To Holman, the kind of debate that has been launched in Washington is absurdly removed from the milieu it sensationalizes. "The Cafe is up in arms," he says. "The man who is fronting for assault weapons says that music kills people. It's all about the election cycle—for politicians who don't want to deal with issues like health care or gun control, it's a surefire *fire.*" By contrast, he says, "the verbal battles between the young female rappers and the Old School padrones are a constant part of the evolution of an art. For a politician to haul out one tiny chunk as if it were the whole thing shows exactly how art is short-circuited in our country."

And yet the demonization of rap, too, has its heritage. Back in the twenties, citizens' groups took up arms against the licentious depravity of another emergent form of popular music. *The Ladies' Home Journal* ran an article entitled "The Jazz Path of Degradation," which alerted its readers: "Jazz is lewd to the physiological limit. In many cases it leads to worse things; and in others it cannot lead to worse things—being a sufficient evil end in itself." "REPRESENTATIVES OF 2,000000 WOMEN MEET TO ANNIHILATE 'JAZZ,' " read a 1923 headline in *Musical Courier.* Their efforts did



"Well, he was on the endangered list, and I thought I could save him."

not carry the day; and their successors are not likely to, either. Today, rap has become one of this country's foremost cultural exports, and its vitality has given new life to other popular idioms. (R. & B., picking up a hip-hop beat, is reborn as New Jack Swing.) And if verse that explores the often sordid aspects of urban life has been similarly vulnerable to attack it has also displayed a similar resilience in the face of it.

One of the most respected poets to appear at the Fez is a woman in her mid-forties named Sapphire, whose first novel will be published by Knopf next year. Adler recalls that she stopped the show at the series in 1993, and says, "To me, she's the most compelling performer in this whole scene." Many of her most powerful poems appear to be autobiographical, and concern an abusive upbringing. But she is perhaps best known for a work called "Wild Thing," an imagined monologue from one of the infamous Central Park rapists: "Her nipples are like / hard strawberries / my mouth tastes / like pesticide." Sapphire's poem sparked controversy (she had received money from the National Endowment for the Arts). And, though it would be a monstrous misreading to take the poem as an endorsement of the monstrousness it depicts, the perspective it adopts is, by design, not a comfortable one. Nor do the raw simplicities of the language offer much comfort. Elsewhere she writes, "There are no words / for some forms / of devastation / though we constantly / try to describe / what America has done / & continues to do to us." Hers is a bleak vision—unpatriotic gore. In a poem entitled "American Dreams," she tells about being a schoolchild on an Army base, and playing in the gymnasium when the general walks in. The young woman supervising the children orders them to stand up for the general:

I said, "My father's in the army, not
  me."
& I remained seated.
& throughout 38 years
of bucking & winging
grinning & crawling
brown nosing & begging
there has been a quiet
10 year old in me
who has remained seated.
She perhaps is the real American
  Dream.

You have to wonder: Would those who inveigh against the menace of gangsta rap find Sapphire's parable of defiance much more palatable? Given their values, *should* they?

It's around midnight at the Nuyorican Poets Cafe when Bob Holman takes the stage. "Tonight is one of those nights," he says. "When the avant-garde decides to be on time—that's amazing." Then he delivers this couplet: "The avant-garde are always late. / The punctual are doomed to wait." He rhapsodizes about poems—"those tiny things of beauty exploding into rhyme"—and instructs the judges and the audience members to rate tonight's performers on a scale from 0 to 10.

A diverse group will appear onstage over the next few hours. Along comes Dael Orlandersmith, a large black woman festooned with reddish-blond braids. She's just won an Obie for her one-woman show "Beauty's Daughter," and she writes poems about smiles "interwoven w/cigarette smoke & / glitter dust powder"; about

faded party girls
w/broken heels & hearts to match
& their once seductive dances are now
Comic poses
& toothless smiles lie underneath
cheap, loose lipsticked mouths
& their once glittering gowns are
shabby dresses

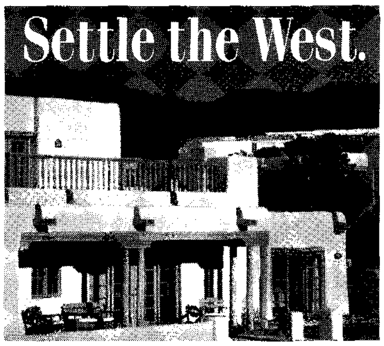
She's having a rough time of it at present. "Fuck you, muthafucka!" she yells up at someone in the balcony who has shouted something rude about her girth. She starts a poem that opens with the image of a crushed rat, then stops to confront her heckler again. He quiets. She resumes her recitation. Among those who follow her are two white women, dressed in black trousers, black vests, and starched white shirts, who chant in counterpoint before the two mikes on the stage: "How did everyone get so ready to kill / At the stupidest shit?" But the crowd's favorite is Paul Beatty, who, along with Reg E. Gaines, is perhaps the best known of those who make the scene. Beatty reads an unpublished poem entitled "Old Yeller Dreams of Days When They Wasn't Just Whistlin' Dixie," which consists of plays on the word "coon":

poets who call readings "performances"
  coons
spoken word no images make a painful
  face take pity on me i'm from the
  projects wanna be on tv look ma i'm
  a professional poet coons
art world power brokers who show off
  their stables of marginalized
  trivialized artists of color and other
  coons
and now for the gay coon
the feminist coon
the rap poet coon
the latina coon
et tu, coon?

The crowd erupts. To be in the audience—at the Fez or at the Nuyorican or at S.O.B.'s—is to become a participant in a performance, not simply a spectator; the energy envelops you. There's something exhilarating about being part of a gathering that responds to the recitation of verse by cheering, booing, or shouting "You go, girl!" These are performers who seek to engage, not to impress. But often the material that seemed so captivating in performance just doesn't survive on the page. So it's easy to be condescending about the verse. Holman likes to say that spontaneity has to be carefully rehearsed. Victor Hernandez Cruz, a onetime Nuyorican regular, writes:

I love the quality of the
spoken thought
As it happens immediately
uttered into the air
Not held inside and rolled
around for some properly
schemed moment

Not only does spontaneity require practice but it can take time to arrive at immediacy; and, when you do, it's not something to dismiss. If the meeting of poetry and rap hasn't created great poetry or great rap, it has created a hybrid space where cultural styles jostle and collide; where culture wars spawn not new resentment but new cultures, and—why not?—maybe the odd MTV appearance as well. "The closest thing to it is the way Dylan captured a mass audience and elevated our whole notion of songwriting by drawing upon the poetry of the fifties as a model for his lyrics," Danny Goldberg says. "The rap-meets-poetry movement could very well be of similar moment in the development of rap, and of rap-influenced poetry." Catch Holman's eyes when the groove is right and the vibe is on and what Sha-Key calls the boom poetic is in full swing, and you figure that he's finally built that amusement park his father used to dream about. ◆



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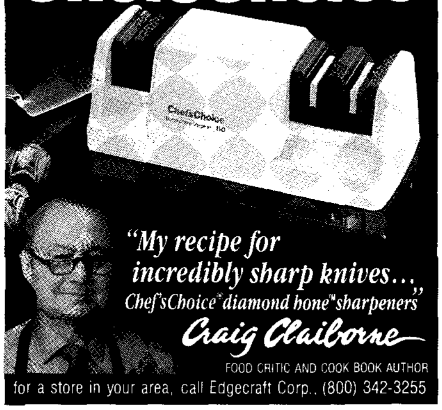

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IN THE GARDEN

PLANT PARENTHOOD

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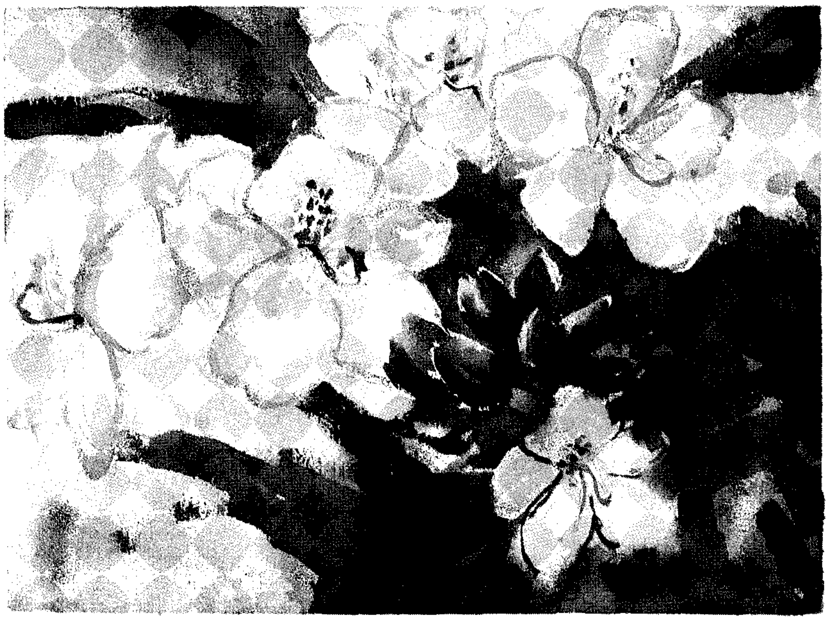
BY JAMAICA KINCAID

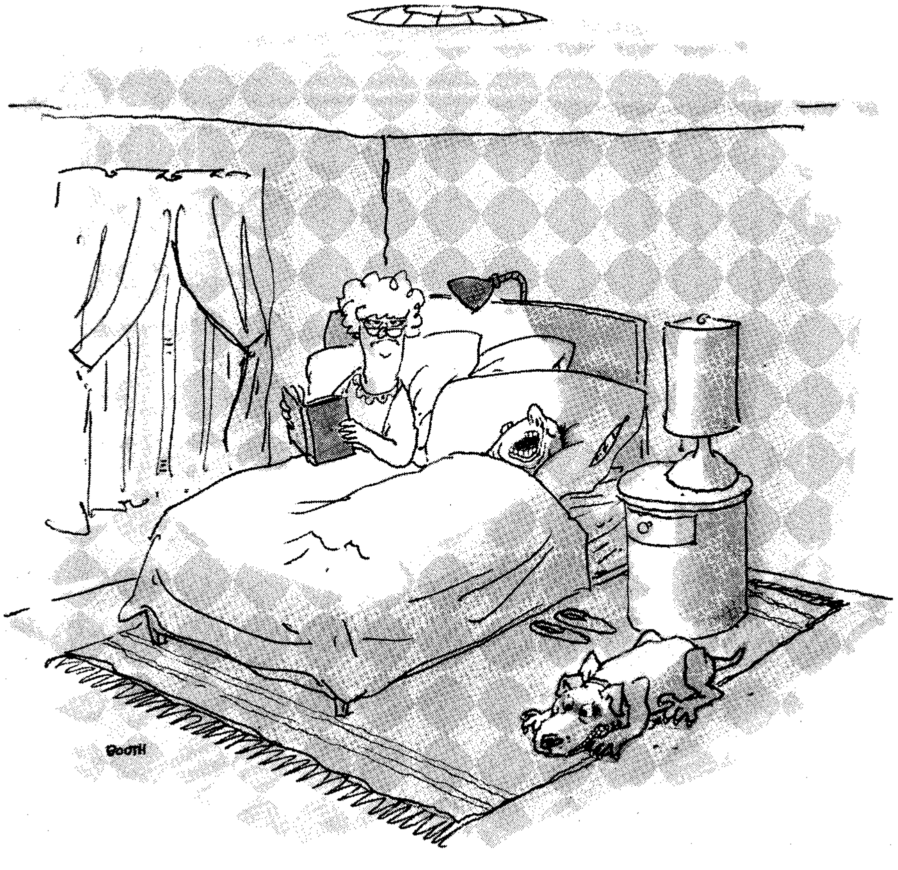


CHRIS CURRY

WHERE to begin? Two different nurseries each sent me three *Dicentra* Snowdrift, although I did not mean to order them from both. To make things worse, one threesome was meant to fill just a single spot in the garden. What to do? Meanwhile, the rhododendron Jane Grant arrived from White Flower Farm, and I planted that immediately. It is one of the most beautiful plants I have ever received in the mail. I should never judge a plant on first sight, even though I believe judging people that way works very well, but as I took the plant out of its brown wrapping I almost wept, it was so beautiful—all delicate and tidy, its leaves medium green on top with a lush indumentum underneath (*R. yakusimanum* is a parent). Perched on top of the old leaves was a generous fist of new leaves, whitish and limy green now. Next year, my Jane Grant may flower into a succession of pink hues. All those hues will remind me of something pleasurable: a girl's dress, the inside of a mouth, the moment very, very early in the morning when light from the sun seems in doubt. For a long time, I had resisted buying this shrub. And why? Jane Grant, the woman it is named for, who founded White Flower with her second husband, was previously married to the first editor of this magazine. At the moment, however, I can't remember why this fact kept me away from it; and this only underlines for me the flabby reasons for many of my opinions and decisions—reasons so flabby, in fact, that I don't even remember them.

I finally ordered the Jane Grant one day in January when I was recovering from pneumonia and was trying to cheer myself up by looking at pictures of flowers for sale, as opposed to pictures of flowers already growing in someone else's garden. I saw the rhododendron beautifully pictured in the White Flower Farm catalogue, and so I ordered it, along with many other things, none of which broke any other prohibitions, as far as I can tell. There is no doubt that everyone can have an interesting garden simply by ordering through Wayside Gardens and White Flower Farm catalogues, but if you want to have a garden made up of plants from other parts of the world—particularly from Japan, Korea, China, and the Himalayan region—as well as unusual plants native to North America, you would have to go to some of the smaller, less well-known nurseries, such as Heronswood (in Kingston, Washington), Arrowhead Alpines (in Fowlerville, Michigan), and Plant Delights (in Raleigh, North Carolina). If you consider *Ephedra* worth growing, you will not be able to buy it from Wayside or White Flower. The Plant Delights Nursery lists eight different kinds. I bought mine from Arrowhead Alpines. And yet here is the thing: the excited prose of Daniel Hinkley (of Heronswood) and of Bob and Brigitta Stewart (of Arrowhead Alpines) will not calm a febrile brain and body, especially when the world outside is hard with cold and covered with ice. It is the large pictures in the Wayside Gardens and White Flower Farm catalogues—with heightened colors of trees, shrubs, perennials, all looking as if they were the positive results of psychological tests—that this gardener, when ill in winter in Vermont, wants to look at.

On the day when all the plants which I had ordered from seeing their pictures arrived, I was not at home to receive them and remove them immediately from their cardboard prisons and provide them with a refreshment of water and a sheltered place. No, I was on my way to Rocky Dale, in Bristol—a legendary nursery among gardeners here in Vermont. It is far from where I live, and so I was going with a friend, who does not share my fear of driving long distances, and even has her own truck. On our way there, she had the good sense to call up and see if Rocky Dale was open. Rocky Dale was not; they are always closed on Tuesdays, it turned out. Then she had the additional good sense to think of our going instead to Talbots' Herb & Perennial Farm, in Hartland. Talbots' is a well-kept secret. Mr. Talbot is a molecular biologist who became a horticulturist, and in the winter he gives lectures on growing plants; his wife helps him with the cultivation and propagation of plants. I had never met them before, and on the spot I found them so appealing that I wished I lived next door. I spent many hours choosing the plants I wanted to buy: flowering quince Cameo, a lace-leaf lilac (*Syringa lacianata*), four fern-leaf peonies (*Paeonia tenuifolia*), some butterbur (*Petasites hybridus*), some ornamen-



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tal rhubarb, two kinds of yellow monkshood, three different grasses, some woodland phlox, some tiarella, a katsura tree, and some pussy willow with black catkins, among other things. I decided that the Talbots were not unlike characters I might meet in a good book and find comfortable and cozy, no matter what their faults—all their faults, of course, falling within reason, which is to say not unlike my own.

On our way home, my friend was annoyed at me. I had bought too many things, she thought. Though she didn't say so, I could see it on her face. But, to my mind, only in very rare circumstances must any plant be bought in ones. The minimum number is three, five is preferable, and then go up from there. To me, almost everything by itself in a garden is wrong. If a plant is very beautiful, more of it will do. The feeling against planting one seems to be widespread. When you must plant one of anything, you are told to regard it as a specimen—but a specimen is so unfamiliar, so unwarm, so ungardenlike. You cannot just take it as part of a scheme—you have to decide whether you like it or you don't. One of anything—children, plants—is so tightfisted!

One day, Mr. Harrington—Ken, not his brother Phil—came to my house and, with the help of his wife and son, began to remove various things from various parts of the yard, including the rubbishy honeysuckle hedge and a large old pine tree that grew just outside the window of my son's room. (This was not a wanton act on my part; the large branches of this tree often rubbed against the windowpane and frightened my son, who is six.) An old lilac was dug out from one place and put somewhere else, and Mr. Harrington remade the driveway. It took him many days to do all this, and as he made many places bare I plotted the many things I could put in those places. Along the road where the honeysuckle used to be I had decided to put in a hedge of buckthorn, but I turned against this idea when I saw what was said about buckthorn in that tyrannical volume the "Manual of Woody Landscape Plants," by Michael A. Dirr. Is there a gardener acquainted with this book who can resist the opinions expressed in it? My friends and I can hardly plant a shrub or a tree of any kind without asking one another, "What does Dirr say?" In the case of my buckthorn, what Dirr had to say resulted in my cancelling an order of twenty buckthorn plants from Roger and Penny Preuss, at the Equinox Valley Nursery, in Manchester. ("The fruits are eaten by birds and the seeds deposited in hedgerows, shrub borders and other out-of-the-way places; can actually become a weed.") Before I settled on the buckthorn, I had wanted to plant a hedge of arrowwood viburnum (*V. dentatum*), but Dirr turned out to be very scornful of that plant. Looking up from Dirr, I found it comforting to see Mr. Harrington sitting on his bulldozer or driving his big truck or just whacking away at something, while his wife and son followed his directions with great care. Observing him, I am reminded that there are two kinds of Vermonters: native Vermonters, who look very much like one another but not in a disturbing way—not in a way that makes you feel bad if you do not look like them—and then the rest of us, recent arrivals, who all look like people in a witness-protection program.

On those days when Mr. Harrington was helping me rearrange the small patches of my land, I walked around with pencil and paper and did something I'd always thought too pretentious even to consider: I made drawings of my garden—or, rather, I connected a series of lines, and inside the lines I wrote down the names of shrubs and herbaceous plants I wanted to put in. I have now, sadly, passed the point of planting only things I love, without caring how they will all look together. Sadly, because love without restrictions is the best kind of love.

I started creating my garden by cultivating the area all around my house. It was timid, this beginning. I now—unsurprisingly, since the house is where I feel safest—wish to move away from the house altogether, down the hill, toward the bog, into the bog. What I wish is to be able to see all of the garden from my house. Yet when I'm in the garden I do not want to see all of it at the same time. This is very hard to do; in fact, I don't know how to do it at all, but I go on anyway. Just as I have moved from simple beds all around the house to more complicated ideas away from the house, so I am no longer satisfied with the usual garden clematis, Nelly Moser. I now

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want the unusual clematis species *marmoraria*. I have fallen in love with undomesticated species. They are harder to like, being always only themselves, and when they are taken out of their own context—untidy nature—and placed in the orderliness of a garden, where they are mostly meant to prop up the jellylike personality of the owner of the garden, they, in turn, appear frail, and either they are not as floriferous as they should be or they are much too vigorous, which is to say they become weeds. But now those qualities are exactly what I want.

All this leads me to Bob and Brigitta Stewart and their Arrowhead Alpines nursery, in Michigan. It was while visiting them one day in late April that I bought some *Peltoboykinia* (for me, this meant a step away from the *Rodgersia*), some *Primula farinosa*, some *Corydalis* from China, some *Campanula betulifolia*, lots of *Primula auricula*, an *Ephedra*, a *Paeonia peregrina*, a *Paeonia lutea*, and three *Gentiana lutea*. To walk around the Arrowhead Alpines nursery with Bob, moving in and out of his greenhouses, is to go down a path from which you can never really return. He picks up something I have never heard of and mentions its connection to a man named Josef Halda, a Czech botanist who has excellent access to the parts of Asia that were formerly under Soviet rule. Josef Halda is the man whose name I associate with that ungiving genus the *Ephedra*. It is scarce of leaf, scarce of flower, scarce of fruit, and native to the less hospitable regions of the world. Bob also mentions Eric Smith and his work with hellebores.

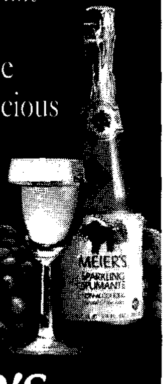
I happen to be devoted to the memory of Eric Smith, but only because of what I know about his work with hostas. Eric Smith hostas are mainly the blue ones, and I try to have as many of his hostas as I can afford. They are not cheap. I was once told by Peter Ruh, of Sunnybrook Farms in Chesterland, Ohio, that Eric Smith had a tortured career as a gardener and plantsman. Apparently an eccentric genius, he ended up working for a famous garden writer as her head gardener, but instead of gardening he continued to hybridize hostas. His employer didn't care very much for hostas, and finally she fired him. In a fit, he pulled all the labels from his plants, and some years later he died. That was in 1986. The people who rescued his hostas had a hard time putting his crossings back together, because he left few notes or other records of the various hostas he used. His hostas are so controversial that W. George Schmid, in his book "The Genus Hosta," can scarcely contain his annoyance at having to deal with this Eric Smith person and his hosta contributions.

Bob then told me of a nursery in Wales I must visit, which is run by a man named Jim Archibald, who once ran a nursery with Eric Smith. It was with Jim Archibald that Eric Smith worked on hellebores. While I was walking through the greenhouse with Bob, and being introduced to a vast treasury of plants for the garden which until then had been unknown to me, I met a man named Jim, who was bent over a tray trying to see if some of the seeds he had received from a plant-hunting expedition in which he had bought shares were finally germinating. They were not.

I had somewhat better luck this spring. None of my fritillarias bloomed, but I loved the bluish green of the leaves of the *persica* and the water-diluted-green leaves of the *imperialis*. The *Primula veris*—grown for me from seeds I gave to Jack Manix, at the Walker Farm, near Putney, and planted last year in June—bloomed in a patch at the edge of a very old hemlock. Some daffodils I had bought on sale for a dollar-fifty a dozen at Whitman's Feed Store, in North Bennington, bloomed. I had not paid much attention when buying them, for it was way past the time when any bulb should have been put in the ground; I bought them only as an afterthought, to fill in a spot. I was just beginning to understand for myself the idea of underplanting; that is, setting bulbs underneath a deciduous tree, or a late-emerging perennial, to blossom before the tree or perennial has refoliated in the spring. These daffodils turned out to be Mount Hood, the most beautiful daffodil I have ever seen, and one of the few daffodils I have ever liked. They start out a creamy yellow, but then change to a spectacular ivory, the shade of dinnerware on a shelf, tempting a child to see just how it would look shattered into many pieces. The reason I do not like daffodils is not at all aesthetic but much more serious than that: having been forced to memorize a poem about daffodils, when none were to be found in the place I grew up. The *Rodgersia* returned, stubby, crooked fingers piercing through the ground. The *Pulmonaria* bloomed so profusely I was sure they belonged to someone else. *Pulmonaria* Janet Fisk and Mrs. Moon have seeded: shall I now wait to see if one of the seedlings is a sport of some kind? But I am not at all interested in such a thing. The white bleeding heart surrounded by *Anemone sylvestris* looked spectacular. The dryish shade area, where I have planted *Lamium*, hostas of all kinds, tiarella, and other things, has finally begun to do its work.

ON the day I returned from the Talbots', I found the plants I had ordered from White Flower Farm and Wayside Gardens. Those orders, along with the many plants I had just bought from the Talbots and some plants Jack Manix had grown for me, were lined up on the floor of the garage, spilling out onto quite a bit of the driveway. The plants were in small pots, large pots, trays of six-packs. It was not a pretty sight. When you look at a garden, this is not what comes to mind. My children complained, and underneath their worry was the milk-money problem. Had their mother spent all the family's money on plants? Would they be hungry? They see the garden as the thing that stands between them and true happiness, which is to say my absolute attention.

Looking at all these plants spilling out of the garage, I thought of some people I know of who are connected with plants. I thought about the seventeenth-century Anglo-Dutch merchant banker George Clifford, who had an enormous garden with four greenhouses near Amsterdam and who had employed Linnaeus, giving him the opportunity to develop his binomial system; and I thought about Reginald Farrer, Ernest Henry Wilson, David Douglas, and many other people who were interested in plants rather than always in the garden (for the two meet only in secret and in people as ordinary as I am). And in thinking of this array of people I remembered again that many of them did not die in their own beds: Douglas fell into a pit trap in Hawaii that already held a wild bull, which gored him to death; Wilson died, with his wife, in a traffic accident near Worcester, Massachusetts, after living to see *Lilium regale* in its natural habitat, on a riverbank in China; Farrer died of diphtheria in Burma. For my part, I resolved to die in a nursery. ♦



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ANNALS OF THE COLD WAR

THE GENERAL AND WORLD WAR III

Curtis LeMay believed that the only sure nuclear defense was to launch a preëmptive first strike. During the Cuban missile crisis, he almost did it.

BY RICHARD RHODES

IN 1945, the Air Force sent a thirty-eight-year-old major general named Curtis LeMay to the Pacific to direct its ineffectual air war against Japan, where the newly discovered jet stream was playing havoc with high-altitude precision bombing. The *New Yorker* reporter St. Clair McKelway, who was serving as a public-relations officer on Guam, described the General's arrival in these pages: "He was around a few days, said almost nothing to anybody, was what, by civilian standards, would be called rude to many people. He was a big, husky, healthy, rather stocky, full-faced, black-haired man." He chewed a cigar stub to disguise the Bell's palsy that he'd got from flying high and cold; it made one side of his lower lip droop. He spoke, McKelway wrote, "through teeth that had obviously been pried open only with effort, an effort with which the speaker had no real sympathy." He was a warrior as hard as Ulysses S. Grant, a bomber pilot, a big-game hunter: dark, fleshy, smart. "I'll tell you what war is about," he once said with characteristic bluntness. "You've got to kill people, and when you've killed enough they stop fighting."

LeMay in 1954: "We'd have been a hell of a lot better off if we'd got World War III started in those days."

A. Y. OWEN, LIFE MAGAZINE © TIME INC.

LeMay studied the mission reports and reconnaissance photographs, realized that the Japanese had almost no air defense left, and sent three hundred and twenty-five planes loaded with jellied-gasoline firebomb clusters over Tokyo in the early hours of March 10, 1945. "You're going to deliver the biggest firecracker the Japanese have ever seen," he told his crews. As he waited impatiently for the bombers to return, he confided to McKelway, "In a war, you've got to try to keep at least one punch ahead of the other guy all the time. A war is a very tough kind of proposition. If you don't get the enemy, he gets you. I think we've figured out a punch he's not expecting this time."

The mission succeeded: the United States Strategic Bombing Survey estimated that "probably more persons lost their lives by fire at Tokyo in a 6-hour period than at any time in the history of man." LeMay's subsequent mission report emphasized that the object of the attack "was *not* to bomb indiscriminately civilian populations." But the destruction that first windy night was in fact indiscriminate to the point of atrocity, as LeMay himself understood: nearly seventeen square miles of the Japanese capital burned to the ground, with at least a hundred thousand people killed and hundreds of thousands injured. "CONGRATULATIONS," LeMay's boss, Air Force Chief of Staff Henry A. (Hap) Arnold, telexed him from Washington. "THIS MISSION SHOWS YOUR CREWS HAVE GOT THE GUTS FOR ANYTHING." LeMay laid on firebombings night after night until the end of the war, by which time sixty-three Japanese cities had been totally or partially burned out and more than a million Japanese civilians killed. Hiroshima and Nagasaki survived to be atomic-bombed only because Washington had removed them from Curtis LeMay's target list. Years later, he told a cadet who asked how much "moral considerations" had affected his decisions, "I suppose if I had lost the war, I would have been tried as a war criminal. Fortunately, we were on the winning side."

Three months after Hiroshima, LeMay gave a speech to the Ohio Society of New York. The next war, he warned, would be fought with fantastic new weapons—a war of "rockets, radar, jet propulsion, television-guided missiles, speeds faster than sound and atomic power." It would be an air war. Before the next war, he insisted, "the air force must be allowed to develop unhindered and unchained. There must be no ceiling, no boundaries, no limitations to our air power development."

Then LeMay came to a contradiction that he would chew over for years to come. First, he offered one of his touchstone concepts: "No air attack, once it is launched, can be completely stopped." That meant to LeMay that the United States would have to have an air force "in being" that could move immediately to retaliate if the country was attacked. The preparation for retaliation, the threat of it, might be sufficient to prevent attack in the first place. "If we are prepared it may never come. It is not immediately conceivable that any nation will dare to attack us if we are prepared." So in November of 1945 LeMay was already thinking in terms of what came to be called deterrence. But therein lay the contradiction: If no air attack could be completely stopped, then retaliation would not protect the country—it would only destroy the enemy's country in turn.

Before the invention of nuclear weapons, wars had been built by hand, so to speak, one engagement after another, until one side felt itself sufficiently damaged to capitulate. Nuclear weapons, encapsulating enormous violence in small, portable mechanisms, changed those conditions, making it possible for warring powers to deliver unacceptable damage immediately and mutually. The consequences of this revolution in the terms of war were not immediately obvious to American military and civilian leaders, though they seem to have been obvious to the Soviets. Working out how the rules had changed took time. In the four years that the United States held a monopoly on nuclear weapons, it reduced its military forces to bare bones, shrank the defense budget from its wartime high of nearly ninety billion dollars to less than fifteen billion dollars, and counted on a small but growing nuclear arsenal to deter a Soviet march to the Atlantic across a war-ravaged Western Europe.

The panic within the U.S. government when the Soviets tested their first atomic bomb, in 1949, followed from the realization that nuclear deterrence would soon be mutual, leaving the Communist enemy with superior conventional forces (which is why the U.S. rushed to invent a new unique capability, the hydrogen bomb). At that point, LeMay and his military colleagues began to think of the U.S. nuclear arsenal as a "wasting asset," and to consider ways that arsenal might be used before it was lost to mutual deterrence. Presidents from Truman and Eisenhower onward made it clear privately, if not always publicly, that they did not believe either nuclear superpower would dare start a war, but LeMay and other military leaders were responsible for fighting such a war, if it came. Like it or not, they had to think about how it might be fought, and they concluded it could only be fought if the United States struck first. But an explicit Presidential order denied them that option. The order did not always stop LeMay. As commander of the Strategic Air Command in the early nineteen-fifties, he found himself in a nuclear double bind—the political and the military interpretations of the new age simply could not be reconciled. During the Cuban missile crisis, the determination of LeMay and some of his subordinates to follow military logic, subverting Presidential authority to do so, nearly led to full-scale nuclear war with the Soviet Union. The United States came much closer to self-inflicted nuclear destruction at that time than most Americans realize.

THE Strategic Air Command was created in March, 1946, as the United States' atomic striking force. Its immediate purpose was to counter Soviet ambitions in Europe. By the time LeMay took it over, three years after the end of the war, the Soviets were actively probing U.S. intentions in Berlin and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, as LeMay quickly realized, the force was far from combat ready.

"Everybody thought they were doing fine," the new SAC commander recalled in retirement. "The first thing to do was convince them otherwise." In January of 1949, LeMay ordered a maximum-effort mission against Wright Field, in Dayton, Ohio—"a realistic combat mission, at combat altitudes, for every airplane in SAC that we could get into the air." Since Air Force intelligence could supply only vintage prewar photographs of Soviet cities, LeMay gave his crews 1938 photographs of Dayton. He instructed them to bomb by radar from thirty thousand feet, instead of the lackadaisical fifteen thousand feet they had adopted for practice. "Nobody seemed to know what life was like upstairs," he recalled in his autobiography. Not many crews even found Dayton. For those who did, bombing scores ran from one to two miles off target—distances at which even Nagasaki-yield atomic bombs would do only marginal damage. LeMay called the results of the Dayton exercise "just about the darkest night in American military aviation history. Not one airplane finished that mission as briefed. *Not one.*"

He decided that his goal was "to build a force so professional, so powerful that we would not have to fight. In other words, we had to build a deterrent

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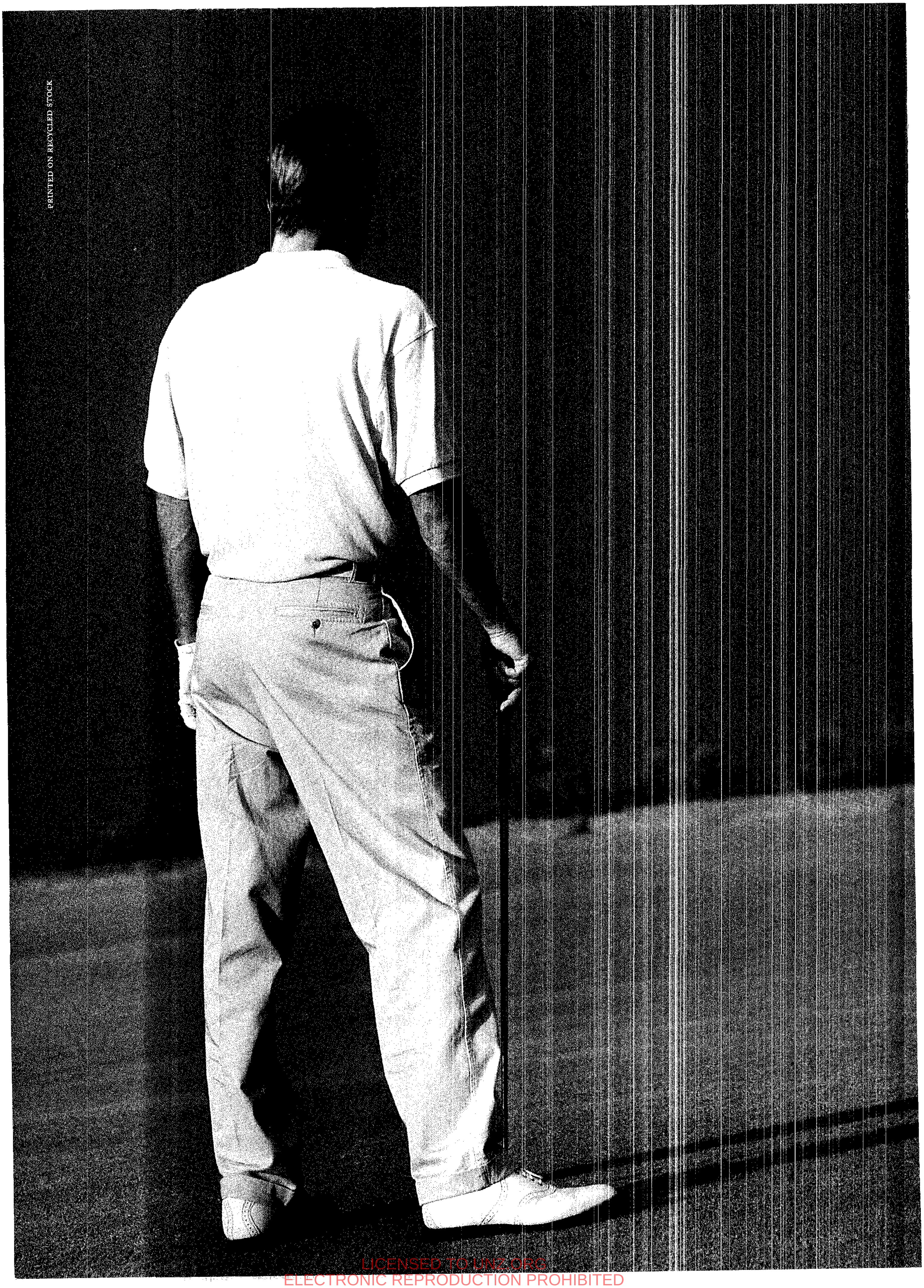
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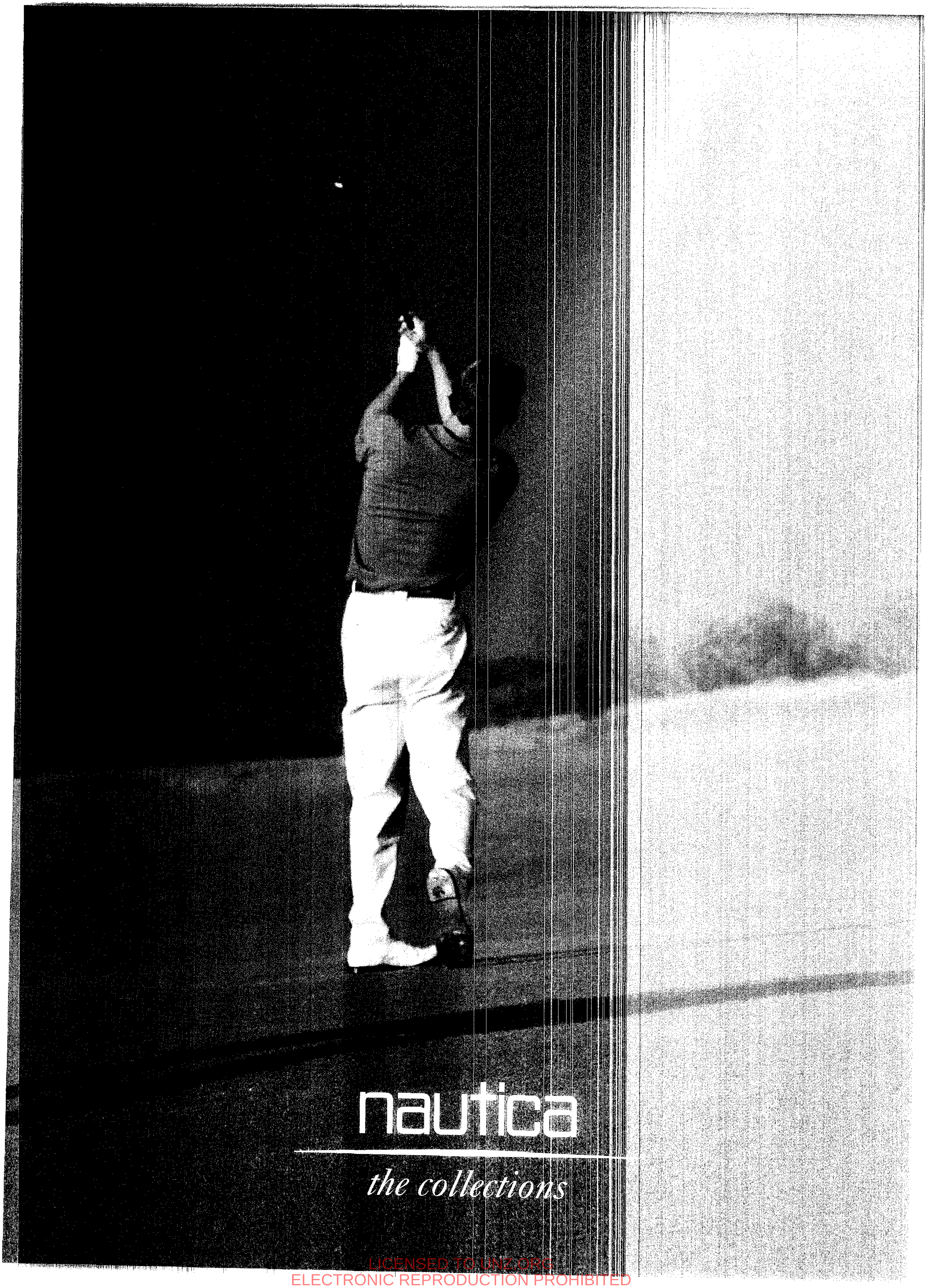
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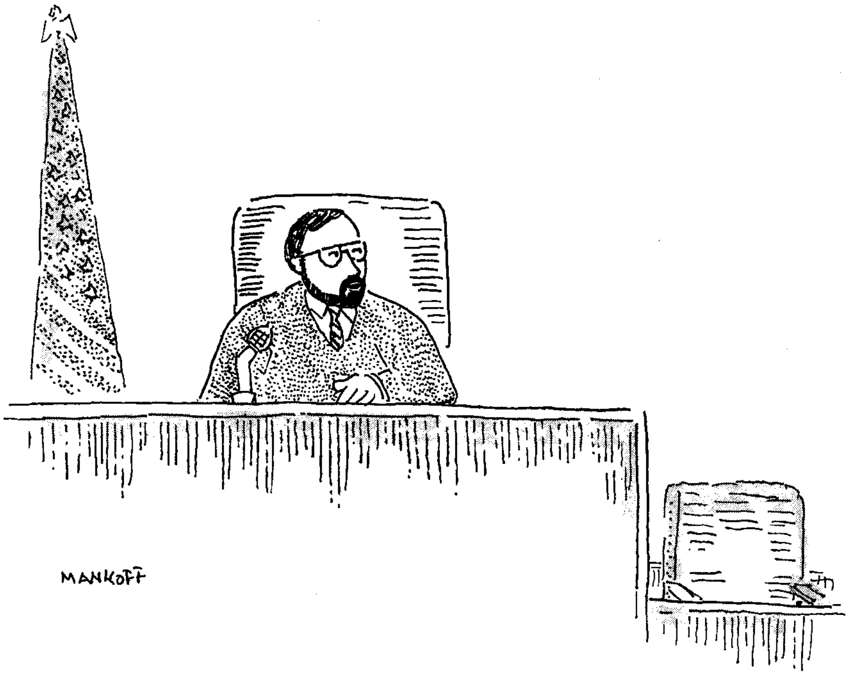
force." But as LeMay began turning SAC around, he had to face the mortal question he had skirted in his speech to the Ohio Society. Despite the poor performance over Dayton, atomic bombs made hitting the target right the first time far more probable than ordinary high explosives had allowed. Given a "war aim of complete subjugation of the enemy," the Air Force War Plans Division had recently concluded, "it would be feasible to risk an all-out atomic attack at the beginning of a war in an effort to stun the enemy into submission." So when LeMay took his ideas for a SAC war plan to his superiors in the Air Force, he proposed that "the primary mission of SAC should be to establish a force in being capable of dropping 80% of the stockpile in one mission." By then he was confident, he assured them, that "the next war will be primarily a strategic air war and the atomic attack should be laid down in a matter of hours." The Air Force agreed: the plan that resulted entailed destroying seventy Soviet cities in thirty days with a hundred and thirty-three atomic bombs, causing up to 2.7 million deaths and another four million casualties. American air-power strategists had a name for such an attack as LeMay was proposing: "killing a nation."

In the spring of 1953, a committee headed by retired Air Force General James Doolittle proposed giving the Russians a two-year deadline to come to terms and attacking them if they failed to do so (thus using the wasting asset to force a decision). The following year, President Eisenhower rejected this bizarre nuclear ultimatum and issued an updated Basic National Security Policy statement: "The United States and its allies must reject the concept of preventive war or acts intended to provoke war."

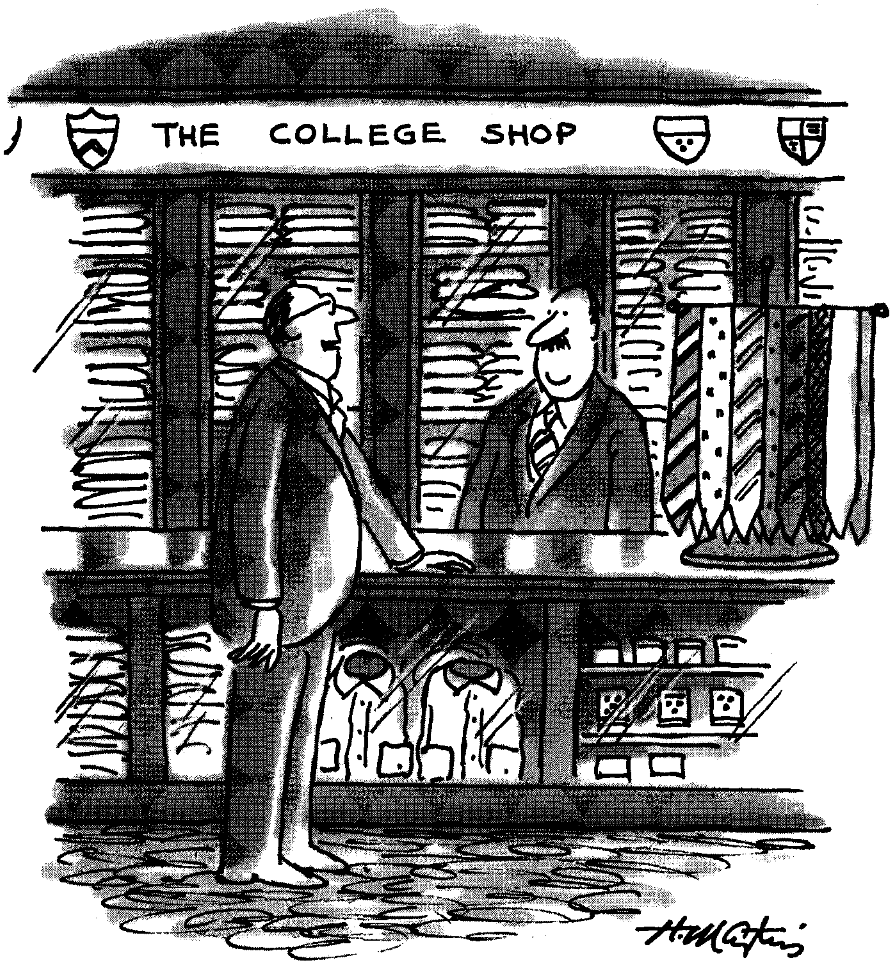
At the outset of the Korean War, in 1950, LeMay had asked the Pentagon, as he said later, to "turn SAC loose with incendiaries" on North Korea; Truman's advisers had rejected such a blitzkrieg of mass destruction. SAC was ultimately authorized to bomb urban and rural North Korea anyway, piecemeal, and carried out its assignment brutally, burning out cities and breaking big agricultural dams, scouring out entire valleys of peasant villages and rice paddies as far as twenty-seven miles downstream, spreading the agony across the years of war. More than two million North Korean civilians died in that campaign, a little-known toll comparable to civilian losses in Japan during the Second World War. "Over a period of three years or so," LeMay remembered, "we killed off—what—twenty percent of the population of [North] Korea. . . . This seemed to be acceptable to everybody; but to kill a few people at the start right away, no, we can't seem to stomach that." Such inconsistencies further undermined LeMay's trust in Presidential decisiveness. If deterrence had to be his formal strategy, he would also prepare darker strategies against the hazard that deterrence might fail.

Since *preventive* war was not an available remedy to the enlarging Soviet capacity for a first strike, SAC was authorized to plan for *preëmption*—for beating the Soviet forces to the punch if intelligence indicated they were beginning a first strike. The C.I.A. estimated that the Soviet Union would need a month to assemble and deliver its small stock of nuclear weapons. The Joint Chiefs ordered SAC to assign highest priority to a "blunting mission" that would take out Soviet airfields first upon Presidential determination that a Soviet attack had begun, followed by attacks on advancing Soviet troops, followed finally by attacks on cities and government control centers.

LeMay had no interest in dribbling out his forces on three disparate missions. The Soviets might need a month in 1954 to deliver their arsenal of about a hundred and fifty atomic bombs; his thousand and eight bomber crews, once deployed, could deliver as many as seven hundred and fifty bombs in a few hours. The SAC commander continued to believe obstinately that the most effective attack would be his "Sunday punch": simultaneous assault from all sides with everything in the stockpile. According to documents analyzed in *International Security* by the defense consultant David Alan Rosenberg, Captain William Brigham Moore, a Navy officer, attended a SAC standard briefing on March 15, 1954, kept notes, and came away appalled: "The final impression was that virtually all of Russia would be nothing but a smoking, radiating ruin at the end of two hours." During the post-briefing question period, someone asked LeMay what course he would advocate if hostilities were renewed in Korea—by then at truce. He answered that he would drop a few bombs in China, Manchuria, and southeastern Russia. "In those 'poker games,' " the Navy captain quotes LeMay, "such as Korea and Indo-China [where the French were then engaged], we . . . have never raised the ante—we have always just



"Lady and gentleman of the jury, have you reached your verdict?"



"Chest 42, waist 38, inseam 33, Princeton '48."

• •

called the bet. We ought to try raising sometime."

BY 1954, Curtis LeMay had apparently begun raising the ante with the Soviet Union on his own, covertly and extralegally. Reconnaissance overflights of the Soviet Union had begun no later than 1950. LeMay used these flights not only to gather electronic and photographic intelligence; he also used them to probe Soviet air defenses, knowing as he did so that he might be provoking war. There is testimony that he may have meant to do just that. If he could not initiate preventive war, he seems to have concluded, he might be able to push the Soviets to sufficiently high levels of alert to justify launching a full preëmptive attack. He linked reconnaissance with provocation in an interview after he retired:

> There was a time in the 1950s when we could have won a war against Russia. It would have cost us essentially the accident rate of the flying time, because their defenses were pretty weak. One time in the 1950s we flew all of the reconnaissance aircraft that SAC possessed over Vladivostok at high noon. Two reconnaissance airplanes saw MiGs, but there were no interceptions made. It was well planned, too—crisscrossing paths of all the reconnaissance airplanes. Each target was hit by at least two, and usually three, reconnaissance airplanes to make sure we got pictures of it. We practically mapped the place up there with no resistance at all. We could have launched bombing attacks, planned and executed just as well, at that time.

Soviet defense forces had no way of knowing if LeMay's crisscrossing reconnaissance aircraft carried nuclear weapons or not. If Soviet aircraft had crisscrossed American cities under similar circumstances, SAC would certainly have preëmpted. The Soviets hunkered down, because they had no adequate response, but their lack of defenses predictably emboldened LeMay.

In 1954, LeMay remarked to a reconnaissance pilot whose plane had been damaged by a MiG-17 while over the Soviet Union, "Well, maybe if we do this overflight right, we can get World War III started." The pilot, Hal Austin, told the documentary filmmaker Paul Lashmar that he assumed LeMay was joking, but years later, after LeMay retired, Austin saw him again and "brought up the subject of the mission we had flown. And he remembered it like it was yesterday. We chatted about it a little bit. His comment again was, 'Well, we'd have been a hell of a lot better off if we'd got World War III started in those days.' "

Was LeMay joking? The best evidence that he was not is his own testimony, in a lecture he delivered to the National War College, in April, 1956. Decisive victory in a nuclear war, he emphasized on that occasion, would have been reached "in the first few days" of battle. The Soviet Union was not yet capable of achieving such a decisive nuclear victory, but it was "building a global bombing force with aircraft and nuclear weapons of satisfactory quality" to make it capable eventually "of devastating the heartland of the United States." The United States did have such decisive capability, however, LeMay asserted. He went on to describe "in cold terms what the United States is capable of doing to the Soviet Union today," a description as chilling as any in the literature of war:

> Let us assume the order had been received this morning to unleash the full weight of our nuclear force. (I hope, of course, this will never happen.) Between sunset tonight and sunrise tomorrow morning the Soviet Union would likely cease to be a major military power or even a major nation. . . . Dawn might break over a nation infinitely poorer than China—less populated than the United States and condemned to an agrarian existence perhaps for generations to come.

Everything depended on "the forces in being at the outset," LeMay emphasized. "The most radical effect of the changes in warfare is not upon how wars are won or lost, but upon how they will start. . . . The dominant fact is that no nation can arrive at a deliberate decision to wage war today unless it is clear, beyond any doubt, that victory is assured." What those facts meant, LeMay went on, was that "we are at war *now*." By defining the state of affairs between the United States and the U.S.S.R. as war *in progress*, LeMay blurred the difference between preventive attack and preëmption: If the Soviet capability was growing, and some bombers always got through, then the time would come when SAC would no longer be able to deliver a clear victory. The United States and the Soviet Union would then be mutually deterred. Robert Oppenheimer had predicted that consequence in 1953 in an analysis in *Foreign Affairs:* "We may anticipate a state of affairs in which two Great Powers will each be in a position to put an end to the civilization and life of the other, though not without risking its own. We may be likened to two scorpions in a bottle, each capable of killing the other, but only at the risk of his own life."

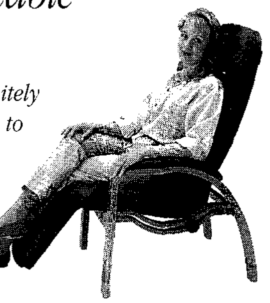
LeMay evidently found the prospect of such stalemate intolerable. SAC was subject to Presidential authority. When the nation is threatened with a nuclear attack, the President, not the SAC commander, assumes the authority to order the use of military force. But LeMay had decided at the beginning of the Korean War, if not before, that there were circumstances under which he would override the Commander-in-Chief's prerogative. For example, the Atomic Energy Commission had custody of U.S. nuclear weapons, but in 1950 LeMay had attempted to arrange privately with the officer commanding the base in Albuquerque where the bombs were stored "to take the bombs" under SAC control if "we woke up some morning and there wasn't any Washington or something."

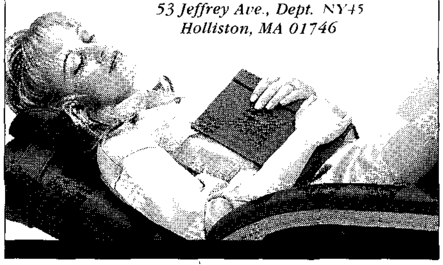
By 1957, he no longer needed to take the bombs. He had them. All that constrained him from delivering them was his soldier's oath. That same year, a committee Eisenhower appointed to study civil and continental defense sent a delegation to SAC to review the command's defenses against a Soviet surprise attack. The delegation included Robert Sprague, president of the Sprague Electric Company, in Massachusetts, and Jerome Wiesner, of M.I.T. As the Boston *Globe* reporter Fred Kaplan recounts in "The Wizards of Armageddon," when LeMay dismissed the delegation with a superficial tour, Sprague arranged for the President to order LeMay to coöperate. Sprague then had LeMay stage an alert. SAC needed more than six hours to take to the air. To Sprague that meant the command was vulnerable to surprise attack: Soviet bombers could make the flight over the North Pole in less than that time.

At SAC headquarters in Omaha, Sprague challenged LeMay. The General dismissed Sprague's concerns contemptuously. SAC had reconnaissance aircraft flying secret missions over the Soviet Union twenty-four hours a day. "If I see that the Russians are amassing their planes for an attack, I'm going to knock the shit out of them before they take off the ground." Sprague was shocked. "But General," he countered, "that's not national policy." Sprague remembered LeMay responding, "I don't care. It's my policy. That's what I'm going to do." According to another account, LeMay responded, "It's my job to make it possible for the President to change his policy"—a less insubordinate answer, but only barely. Sprague chose not to report LeMay's renegade remarks to the President and buried the incident for twenty years.

IN the autumn of 1961, newly orbited United States reconnaissance satellites revealed that the Soviet Union had fewer strategic delivery systems than our intelligence had previously estimated—only forty-four ICBMs and a hundred and fifty-five heavy bombers (compared to the United States' hundred and fifty-six ICBMs, hundred and forty-four Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missiles, and thirteen hundred strategic bombers). Paul Nitze, a prominent hawk then serving as Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, warned the Soviet Ambassador over lunch one day that the "missile gap"—which President John Kennedy had made a campaign issue in 1960—favored the United States; for good measure, the government leaked the story to the journalist Joseph Alsop, who reported the gap in a column. Kennedy may also have warned Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko directly in a private meeting at the White House.

Partly as a result of these warnings, the Soviet leader, Nikita Khrushchev, decided to install nuclear missiles secretly in Cuba early in 1962. By August, the C.I.A. was reporting that medium-range ballistic missiles might be part of the deployment. A U-2 overflight on October 14th first found MRBM sites





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in western Cuba. Kennedy condemned the secret installation and announced an impending naval "quarantine" on October 22nd—Monday night of a harrowing week when the superpowers verged on full-scale nuclear war.

The SAC commander at that time was Thomas Power, a LeMay protégé, who had led the March 10, 1945, firebombing mission over Tokyo. LeMay had been promoted to Air Force Chief of Staff, which put him in the Pentagon during the Cuban missile crisis. ("Those were ten days when neither Curt nor I went home," General David Burchinal, then LeMay's deputy chief for plans and programs, recalled. "We slept in the Pentagon right around the clock.") Power, it seems, was at least as eager as LeMay to "get World War III started." According to the political scientist Scott Sagan, in "The Limits of Safety," Power had been told by LeMay's predecessor as Chief of Staff, Thomas White, that he had the authority to do so. General White wrote Power in 1957 that "authority to order retaliatory attack may be exercised by CINCSAC"—the SAC commander—"if time or circumstances would not permit a decision by the President." McGeorge Bundy, Kennedy's national-security adviser, had warned the young President of just such a possibility. "A subordinate commander," Bundy alerted Kennedy in January, 1961, "faced with a substantial Russian military action could start the thermonuclear holocaust on his own initiative if he could not reach you (by failure of communication at either end of the line)." LeMay acknowledged in retirement that Power was "a sadist"; Sagan quotes one of Power's subordinate commanders who confirms that view:

> A hard, cruel individual. . . . I would like to say this. I used to worry about General Power. I used to worry that General Power was not stable. I used to worry about the fact that he had control over so many weapons and weapon systems and could, under certain conditions, launch the force. Back in the days before we had real positive control, SAC had the power to do a lot of things, and it was in his hands, and he knew it.

"Where did you get your husband?"

By Presidential order, the United States military went from DefCon (Defense Condition) 5 to DefCon 3 during Kennedy's Monday-night speech. DefCon 5 was business as usual; DefCon 3 was halfway up the scale. When Kennedy began speaking on national television, at seven o'clock, fifty-four SAC bombers, each carrying as many as four thermonuclear weapons, thundered off from continental bases to join the routine twelve-plane around-the-clock airborne alert. Some of the sixty-six bombers orbited the Mediterranean; others circumnavigated North America; others flew an Arctic route across Greenland, north of Canada, across Alaska, and down the Pacific Coast of North America. One orbited above Thule, Greenland, to observe and report any pre-attack Soviet assault on the crucial United States early-warning radar there. Polaris submarines put to sea. SAC armed the remaining planes of its bomber force, dispersed them to military and civilian airfields, and prepared some hundred and thirty Atlas and Titan ICBMs for firing. Kennedy and Khrushchev began an exchange of belligerent messages. Kennedy had convened an executive committee, or ExComm, of government officials to manage the crisis; opinion in the committee ranged from blockade to air strike to Cuban invasion. The President said afterward that the purpose of the alert was to deter a Soviet military response to whatever Caribbean action the United States decided to carry out: "The airborne alert," he congratulated SAC, "provided a strategic posture under which every United States force could operate with relative freedom of action." General Power saw a more threatening purpose, however; from his point of view, "This action by the nation's primary war deterrent force gave added meaning to the President's dec-

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Shouldering my daughter
like a set of pipes
I walk her
to a dead march
and counterpoint her crying
with my hummed drone:
the floo'ers o' the forest
are a' wi'ed awae

my cracked reed
blanking
on the high note,
the way a nib runs dry
in the rut it makes,
and splays.

—Robin Robertson

laration that the U.S. would react to any nuclear missile launched from Cuba with a full retaliatory response upon the Soviet Union itself." Kennedy, that is, was thinking regional engagement under a nuclear umbrella; Power and LeMay were thinking global war.

On Wednesday, October 24th, when the naval quarantine took effect, SAC ratcheted from DefCon 3 to DefCon 2—the first and only time it was ever ordered to do so. SAC-alerted nuclear weapons increased to two thousand nine hundred and fifty-two; with a hundred and twelve Polaris SLBMs, their total destructive force exceeded seven thousand megatons. "We got everything we had in the strategic forces . . . counted down and ready and aimed," General Burchinal said afterward, "and we made damn sure they saw it without anybody saying a word about it." In fact, Power said several words about it, unauthorized and publicly, when he broadcast in the clear—in English rather than in code—to all SAC wings immediately after the move to DefCon 2 was announced:

> This is General Power speaking. I am addressing you for the purpose of reëmphasizing the seriousness of the situation the nation faces. We are in an advanced state of readiness to meet any emergencies and I feel that we are well prepared. I expect each of you to maintain strict security and *use calm judgment during this tense period.* Our plans are well prepared and are being executed smoothly. . . . Review your plans for further action *to insure that there will be no mistakes or confusion.*

SAC routinely transmitted DefCon increases as unclassified messages until 1972, and Power was clearly emphasizing control. His broadcast was nevertheless a warning to the Soviets—who Power knew monitored such transmissions—that the United States had gone to full alert and might be planning "further action." Equally unsanctioned, and potentially catastrophic, notes Sagan, was the launch of an Atlas ICBM from Vandenberg Air Force Base, in California, across the Pacific to the Kwajalein test range, in the Marshall Islands, at 4 A.M. on October 26th, at the height of the Cuban missile crisis. SAC had taken over the test missiles at Vandenberg at the time of the DefCon 3 alert, programmed them with Soviet targets, and begun attaching nuclear warheads. The Atlas, which was unarmed, had been scheduled for testing; it was launched on its pre-crisis schedule with SAC concurrence—a deliberate provocation.

When the missile crisis began, the United States' first squadron of Minuteman I solid-fuel missiles was undergoing testing and certification prior to deployment at Malmstrom Air Force Base, in Montana. SAC, the Air Force Systems Command, and contractor personnel worked non-stop to ready the Minutemen for launch. A declassified history of the missile wing reports that "lack of equipment, both standard and test, required many work-arounds." The first Minuteman was ready to go on October 26th; five had been made operational by October 30th. But miswiring, wire shorts, and other problems left the missiles capable of being accidentally armed; one had to be shut down and restarted five times, because its guidance and control systems failed, and every Minuteman at Malmstrom had to be taken off alert repeatedly for repairs in the course of the crisis. For safety and control, immediate launch required redundant, coördinated keying by four officers in two physically separate launch-control centers. The Malmstrom work-around overrode that safety system. One officer who controlled the Minutemen during the missile crisis later told Sagan, "We didn't literally 'hot wire' the launch command system—that would be the wrong analogy—but we did have a second key. . . . I could have launched it on my own, if I had wanted to." An Air Force safety-inspection report noted after the crisis that "possible malfunctions of automated equipment . . . *posed serious hazards* [including] accidental launch." Another possibility, which the inspectors did not mention, was unauthorized launch.

According to Sagan, Air Defense Command F-106s armed with nuclear air-to-air missiles scrambled at Volk Field, in Wisconsin, on October 25th, when a launch klaxon went off in the middle of the night. Practice alert drills had been cancelled at DefCon 3, so when the klaxon sounded the interceptor crews assumed that they were going to war. Since they had not been briefed that SAC bombers were aloft, and they did not know SAC airborne-alert routes, there was a real possibility of U.S. missiles attacking U.S. bombers—nuclear friendly fire. The launch klaxon sounding was a mistake: an Air Force guard at the Duluth Sector Direction Center had sounded a sabotage alarm that somehow keyed the klaxon at Volk Field. The guard in Duluth had seen someone climbing the base security fence and had fired at the figure. An officer flashing his car lights drove onto the Volk Field runway and managed to stand down the F-106s; on closer inspection, the saboteur in Duluth had turned out to be a bear.

There were other serious command-and-control snafus during the missile

ROSEMARY'S BABY TURNS TWENTY-SEVEN
I don't care who you are. It's time you found a job and got your own place.
Aw, Ma. Leave me alone.
R.Chast

crisis as well: a U-2 strayed over Siberia, leading Khrushchev to complain to Kennedy that "an intruding American plane could be easily taken for a nuclear bomber, which might push us to a fateful step"; air-defense interceptors flew fully armed with nuclear rockets from which all safety devices had been removed; United States radar picked up an apparent missile launch from Cuba with a near-Tampa trajectory on Sunday morning, October 28th, which was determined only after predicted impact to have been a computer test tape; the United States Navy tracked Soviet submarines aggressively throughout the world, forcing them to surface, when it had been ordered to do so only in the area of quarantine.

MORE dangerous by far than all these incidents was Curtis LeMay's overconfident and belligerent advice to John F. Kennedy, whom he had believed since at least the stillborn invasion at Cuba's Bay of Pigs, in 1961, to be a coward. Knowing that the United States and the Soviet Union were approaching mutual deterrence and that SAC was therefore a wasting asset, LeMay pushed Kennedy to up the ante, bomb Cuba, and take out the missile sites. "The Kennedy administration thought that being strong as we were was provocative to the Russians and likely to start a war," he said with disgust in retirement. "We in the Air Force, and I personally, believed the exact opposite. . . . We could have gotten not only the missiles out of Cuba, we could have gotten the Communists out of Cuba at that time. . . . During that very critical time, in my mind there wasn't a chance that we would have gone to war with Russia because we had overwhelming strategic capability and the Russians knew it." According to Dino Brugioni, in his book "Eyeball to Eyeball," LeMay argued at one Pentagon briefing during the crisis that "the Russian bear has always been eager to stick his paw in Latin American waters. Now we've got him in a trap, let's take his leg off right up to his testicles. On second thought, let's take off his testicles, too." As LeMay's castration imagery implies, he may have been goading Kennedy to attack Cuba as an excuse to launch full strategic preëmption; discussing the missile crisis a decade later with the historian Ernest May, he said, according to May, that "it was his belief that at any point the Soviet Union could have been obliterated without more than normal expectable SAC losses on our side." In "On the Brink," an oral history of the crisis compiled by James Blight and David Welch, Robert McNamara, Kennedy's Secretary of Defense, remembers that, characteristically, "LeMay talked openly about a first strike against the Soviet Union if the Russians ever backed us into a corner."

Soon after the missiles were discovered, LeMay and the Joint Chiefs unanimously urged the President to order an immediate air strike against all military targets in Cuba. Fortunately, Kennedy resisted such pressure. Robert Kennedy later wrote, in "Thirteen Days":

> When the President questioned what the response of the Russians might be, General LeMay assured him there would be no reaction. President Kennedy was skeptical. "They, no more than we, can let these things go by without doing something. They can't, after all their statements, permit us to take out their missiles, kill a lot of Russians, and then do nothing. If they don't take action in Cuba, they certainly will in Berlin."

The President's instincts were sharper than the General's. The blockade worked; the crisis passed; Khrushchev capitulated. LeMay was outraged. At the Hawk's Cay Conference, a 1987 reunion of Ex-Comm officials, McNamara remembered that LeMay made his feelings clear to Kennedy. "After Khrushchev had agreed to remove the missiles, President Kennedy invited the Chiefs to the White House so that he could thank them for their support during the crisis, and there was one hell of a scene. LeMay came out saying, 'We lost! We ought to just go in there today and knock 'em off!' "

At the height of the crisis, according to a retired SAC wing commander, SAC airborne-alert bombers deliberately flew past their customary turnaround points toward the Soviet Union—an unambiguous threat that Soviet radar operators would certainly have recognized and reported. ("I knew what my target was," the SAC general adds. "Leningrad.") The bombers did eventually turn back, but, again, the provocation was clear.

NUCLEAR crises are not poker games. What Curtis LeMay and Thomas Power did not know—what no one in the United States government knew for certain until it was revealed at a conference between Soviet and U.S. missile-crisis participants in Moscow in 1989—was that, contrary to C.I.A. estimates, the Soviet forces in Cuba during the missile crisis possessed one- to three-megaton hydrogen warheads for some twenty medium-range ballistic missiles that could have been targeted on U.S. cities as far north as Washington, as well as warheads for short-range tactical artillery rockets that the Soviet field commanders in Cuba were authorized to use against a U.S. invasion force. The MRBMs would probably have been launched as well. At the Hawk's Cay Conference, McNamara recalled a conversation with a retired admiral who told him that "if they'd been NATO missiles . . . then the NATO officers, acting without Presidential authorization, would have been likely to use them rather than lose them." McNamara then admitted that "the fear that Soviet or Cuban officers might have reacted the way NATO officers might have was one reason I was extremely reluctant to risk the air strike."

In 1954, when LeMay calculated that he could deliver a Sunday punch of seven hundred and fifty atomic bombs to targets in the Soviet Union overnight, the Defense Department Weapons Systems Evaluation Group estimated that Soviet and Soviet-bloc casualties would total seventeen million injured and sixty million dead. In 1962, Power was prepared to deliver almost three thousand strategic nuclear weapons, many of them thermonuclear bombs, with yields totaling more than seven thousand megatons. Under such a rain of destruction, the United States would have killed at least a hundred million human beings in pursuit of the small group of Soviet leaders, who, as LeMay said in his 1956 lecture at the National War College, "have as their primary goal the . . . retention of power inside the U.S.S.R. in the few hands in which it now resides." If the Soviet field commanders in Cuba had launched their missiles as well, more millions of Americans would have been killed. Seven thousand megatons would also have been more than enough fire and brimstone to initiate a lethal nuclear winter over at least the Northern Hemisphere, freezing and starving yet more millions in Europe, Asia, and North America. If John Kennedy had followed LeMay's advice, history would have forgotten the Nazis and their terrible Holocaust. Ours would have been the historic omnicide.

THE discovery, in 1938, of how to release nuclear energy introduced a singularity into the human world, a deep new reality, a region where the old rules of war no longer applied. Total war—nuclear war—would be suicidal. The Cuban missile crisis finally taught the superpowers that lesson. The Soviet Union never went to full nuclear alert in all the years of the Cold War. After the missile crisis, the United States never did so again. Nor did the two nations ever again directly confront each other. That the exercise of national sovereignty was limited in a nuclear world was not a lesson that LeMay was willing to learn. He went on to champion unsuccessfully the strategic bombing of North Vietnam, dams and all; in 1968, three years after he retired from the Air Force, he teamed with George Wallace to run unsuccessfully as an independent candidate for Vice-President of the United States. Until his death, in 1990, this remarkable leader, whose efforts to carry out an impossible assignment took the world within a hair's breadth of nuclear destruction, continued to believe that the United States had "lost" the Cuban missile crisis and the Cold War. We had not lost, nor had we won. The world had won. Science had revealed a limit to total war. ♦

THE GOOD OLD DAYS

[Letter in the Denver Post]

I applaud your recent editorial, "Don't teach kids to expect money for good morals." Lakewood High School's plan to pay $50 to teenagers for advance tips on illegal keg parties could set a dangerous precedent. Students should not be bribed to do what is morally proper. When I was a teenager no one paid us to be good. We were good for nothing.

She needs shoes,
clothing,
food in the home.
This shouldn't be
what a five year old
in America
has to think about.

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Children, Incorporated, P.O. Box 5381
Dept. Y6C 5, Richmond, Va. 23220 USA

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A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE ROAD TO PARANOIA

There have always been radical fringes on both the left and the right which believe that the government conspires against the people. But lately the two have formed a strange alliance—fusion paranoia—that is reaching millions of disaffected Americans.

BY MICHAEL KELLY

IN a way, what has happened to the country is all about what has happened to Bob Fletcher, and that seems odd when you meet him, because Fletcher is a man of no obvious consequence at all. He is of intermediate size and age—a little below average height, a little above middle years. He has a roundish pink face, brown hair that is beginning to go gray, and a small, pointed beard. He is faintly but honorably seedy, in the way of a man who has been broke for a long time but is still trying to keep up appearances. Wearing a dark-blue suit that is shiny with age and a light-blue shirt that has become vaguely, permanently gray, he looks like someone who occasionally dresses out of his car; the rear seat of his old Volkswagen Beetle is filled with clothes.

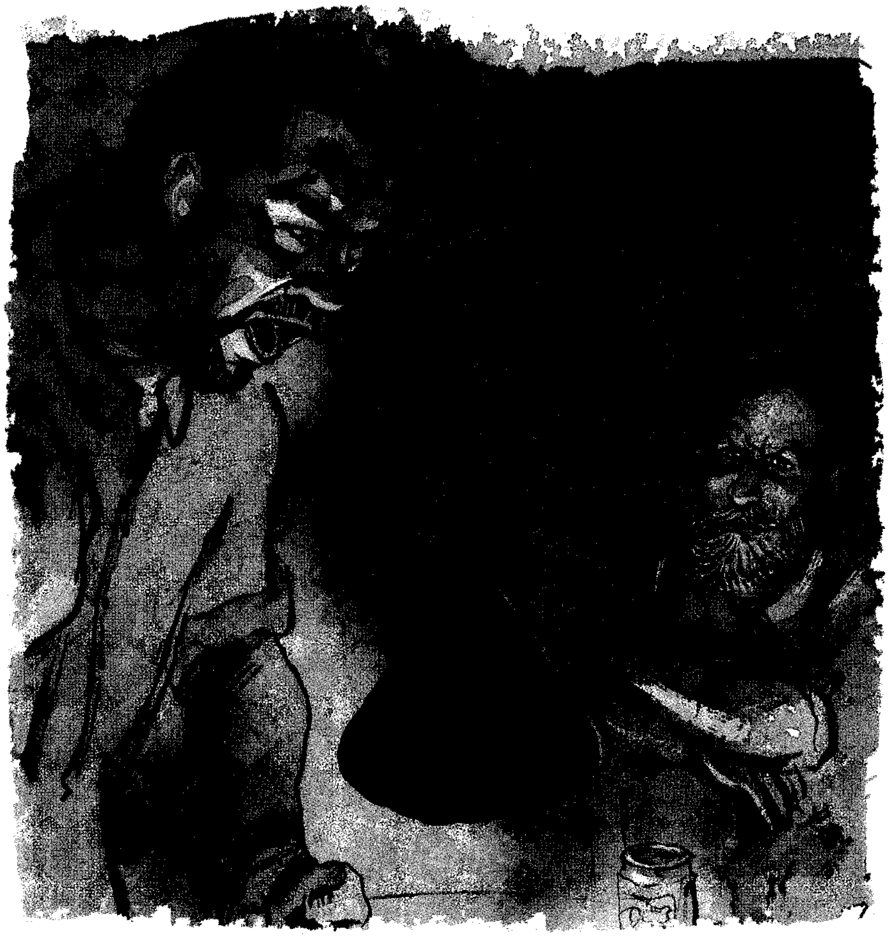
Fletcher is a conspiracist. He is alive with conspiracies. They whirr in his mind and welter in his heart, and they fill him so full of outrage and nervousness that he cannot ever stay still. When he is on a roll—into the business of the New World Order and the black helicopters and the Hong Kong police and the microchips that they put under your skin in the hospital and the secret program to turn the weather into a weapon to kill us all—he gets so wound up he nearly bounces off himself. Even when Fletcher is not up on his feet talking—even when he is sitting—he is in motion, his legs jigging up and down, his knees bouncing in jittery counterpoise to each other, his little feet tap, tap, tapping on the floor, his soft, pale hand trembling in the violence of his agitation and the excitement of his nerves, as he holds out this piece of paper, and that one, and the next, and the next, and the next—the hodgepodge of documents and photographs that Fletcher believes are the proof that the government of the United States is part of a monstrous plot to destroy the United States, and Fletcher.

"Oh, they been planning this for years, for years," he was ranting one night a month ago in the bar at the Hereford Restaurant, near Noxon, Montana. "They built a bomb during the Gulf War that they are planning to use in a big way. The Wackenhut people—they own all the prisons in Australia—build seventy, eighty per cent of the prisons in this country. They're *deep* into the New World Order, the sons of bitches. It's called a fuel-air bomb, and the way it works is you drop the thing and it explodes, sends out this spray of vapor—you know, tiny droplets in the air—and then, just a second or two after that, while the stuff is still in the air, a second bomb explodes: boom! And the thing is, if you have breathed in during those one or two seconds, well, when the second bomb explodes, it not only ignites the vapor in the air, it ignites the vapor in *you*, see, so you explode inside *and* out. Boom! Vaporized! You just freaking disappear! And that's what happened during the Gulf War, my intelligence sources told me, to two hundred thousand Iraqi soldiers. You remember those videos they showed every day? You saw all those Iraqi vehicles on the road? You never saw a damned body. Why? 'Cause they freaking vaporized them is why. Oh, just a little experiment, folks. Just George Bush's little New World Order experiment. Two hundred thousand. What the hell, they were only freaking Iraqis, right?"

Fletcher is a member of a small but showy political organization called the Militia of Montana. MOM, as it is commonly known, is a leader in the American militia movement, which has established groups in at least thirty-nine states. The leadership of MOM consists of a retired maker of snowmobile parts named John Trochmann; Trochmann's wife, Carolyn; his brother David; David's son, Randy; and Fletcher. In this little group, Fletcher's role is twofold: he is MOM's main "investigative researcher," and its frequent spokesman, particularly when it comes to television, because his unexceptional mien is less unnerving than the hairy, glaring, Old Testament face of John Trochmann. Being MOM's flack was a limited job until April 19th, the day a forty-eight-hundred-pound bomb, apparently made of ammonium nitrate and fuel oil, exploded at the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in Oklahoma City, killing a hundred and sixty-seven people. Investigators, after a brief false start in pursuit of the usual Middle Eastern suspects, arrested a former Army enlisted man, Timothy J. McVeigh, and, three weeks later, McVeigh's friend Terry Lynn Nichols. The suspected terrorists were believed to be in philosophical accord with and perhaps inspired by the militia movement. The Militia of Montana became suddenly semi-famous. And for a little while Bob Fletcher became what he had for a long time desperately wanted to be—a man to whom attention was paid.

I met Fletcher a week after the bombing, at the Landmark Café, on the main and nearly the only street in Noxon. By then, he had given more than forty interviews. He was sitting in the back corner booth and working over two young women—a television reporter from Missoula and her camera operator. He was running them through MOM's sacred text, "The Blue Book," which is also the name of the John Birch Society's 1958 classic of global-government conspiracism. The "Blue

Book" theory, which was embraced by the Birchers and has now been adopted by MOM, is a variation on what might be regarded as the mother theory of conspiracism. According to this elaborate construct, whose genesis dates from the late eighteenth century, and which was most famously explained by the British writer and fascist Nesta Webster in a 1924 book, "Secret Societies and Subversive Movements," the course of history has been shaped by a conspiracy, rooted in the occult religions of the pre-Christian era, which seeks to destroy the established Christian order of Western nations and to replace it with an atheistic, socialistic global government. In its most rococo version, the New World Order theory holds that the conspirators have been at it for more than two thousand years, perpetuating their plots through a succession of secret and semisecret societies arcing across time and cultures from the early-Christian-era Gnostics and the Jewish Cabalists, and on to the Knights Templars of the twelfth century, the Rosicrucians of the fifteenth, the Bavarian Illuminati of the eighteenth, and from there, through the Freemasons, to the schemers of the twentieth—the Council of Foreign Relations, the Bilderbergers, and the Trilateral Commission. Along the way, step by step toward one-worldism, the plotters have caused everything from the French and Russian Revolutions to the creation of the Federal Reserve, the United Nations, and the Gulf War.



Montana militiamen Bob Fletcher (left) and John Trochmann. "I'm the same as everybody else in this country," Fletcher says. "I got into this because I got screwed, big time."

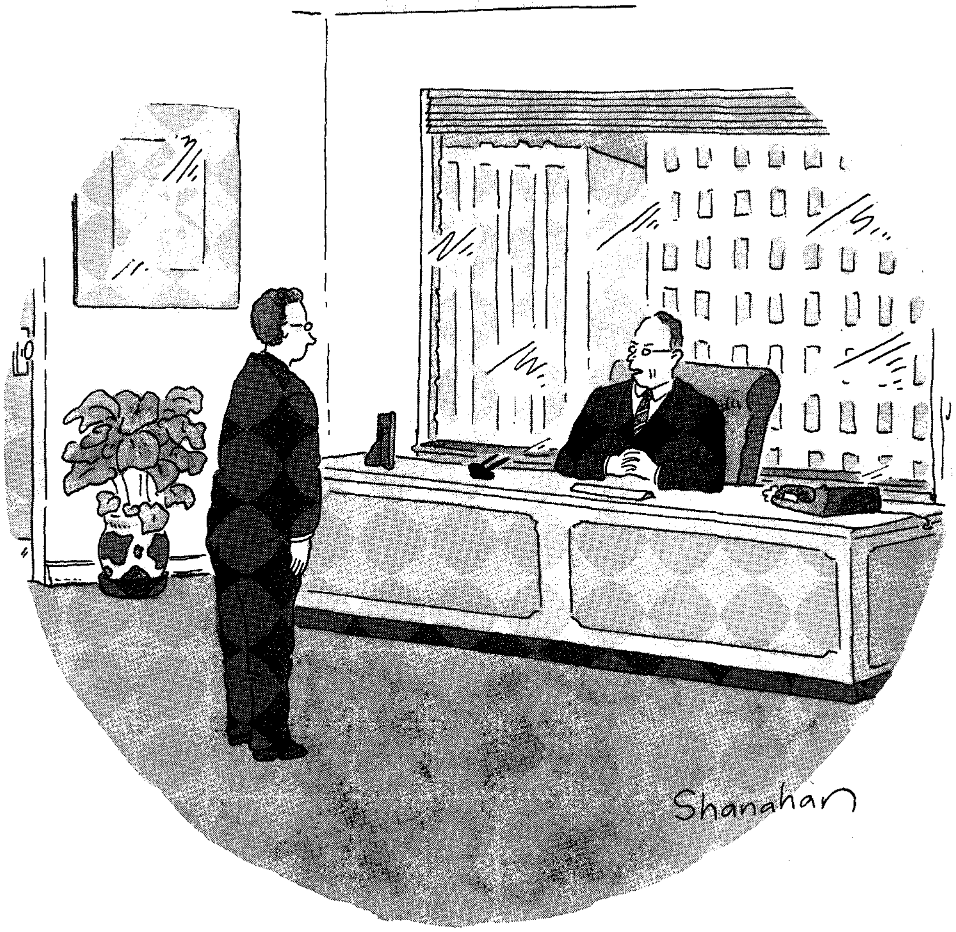
JAMES MCMULLAN

The John Birch Society often gives away its "Blue Book"; MOM charges seventy-five dollars for its version and advertises it in the militia's own mail-order catalogue, which goes out to tens of thousands of people around the country. The catalogue boasts that "The Blue Book" contains "the enemy's own words" and "The Documentation," and promises, "When we take someone on a trip through 'The Blue Book' they cannot argue—*all they can do is say we are right or they just simply RUN AWAY!!!*"

In truth, the documentation is somewhat spotty. "The Blue Book" is an ordinary three-ring binder to which Randy Trochmann is always busily adding what he regards as further evidence of conspiracy, so that it bulges like an eccentric lawyer's briefcase with scraps of this and that, from here and there, which purport to show that the globalists' scheme to subvert American sovereignty and reduce American citizens to vassalage is in its final hours. The takeover will be executed by an occupation army, under United Nations command and composed of foreign troops, National Guard members, and inner-city gangs, which is hidden in national forests and is awaiting the order to spring forth. Exhibits in "The Blue Book" include a newspaper photograph of a depot yard in Mississippi full of old Soviet-bloc troop trucks; a 1994 United Nations development report replete with utopian blather about global government; a copy of a big color photograph that purports to show a Russian missile on its launcher in Texas; a similar photograph showing a United States Army helicopter that appears to be painted black; and, of all things, a photocopy of an illustrated map of America taken from the back of a 1993 Kix cereal box. The map shows the country divided into eleven regions, with Montana in the Mountain region, between the Pacific Coast and the Heartland. This, MOM maintains, is a representation of the New World Order plan for dividing the United States into regional departments after the invaders emerge to take over the country, which is scheduled to happen any day now. Why the conspirators have chosen to publicize their intentions on the back of a cereal box is not clear.

Fletcher is originally from New Jersey, and when he is working hard at the difficult job of selling the threat of the imminent conquest of America he tends to sound like a Secaucus saloon debater. "Russian missiles! Russian trucks! Russian armored personnel carriers! On American soil!" he whooped at the carefully blank-faced TV newswomen. "What's wrong with *that* picture? Huh? What in the freaking hell is *that* all about? Meanwhile, they're dumping three thousand U.S. tanks into the ocean so we can't defend ourselves. What kind of sense does *that* make, sports fans?"

Fletcher harangued the women for an hour, and by the time he slammed "The



"We're very sorry, Doyle, but you've been here for twelve years, and the other temps are starting to talk."

Blue Book" shut they were sitting silent and still, apparently stunned, as if each had been blackjacked lightly upside the head. This is a common response to a Fletcher performance, and it fills Fletcher with a craftsman's pride, as I found when I followed him outside the Landmark Café and introduced myself. "You see those girls?" he said to me. "Hah! I destroyed them. *Destroyed* them! I *Fletcherized* them! After I got through with them, they had to look at their driver's licenses to see who the hell they were!"

We were standing on the concrete porch in front of the Landmark, Fletcher smoking and talking, doing both things in the same hyper, jangly way, in the bright, cool, late-morning sun. I asked Fletcher how he had ended up in Noxon, a tiny town in the northwestern corner of the state, and also how he had ended up a believer in "The Blue Book."

"Basically, I'm the same as everybody else in this country," he said. "I got into this because I got screwed, big time, by my government. It's a long story."

I said I'd like to hear it, and that seemed to please Fletcher. He drew on his cigarette in fast, sharp little puffs, then stepped closer to me, so that his nose was only a few inches from mine.

"Listen, I'm gonna tell you something," he said. "I got a story I haven't given to any of the other reporters, but you might be interested. The story of my whole life, the amazing story of how I came to be involved in all this. It's an amazing goddam freaking story, I'm not bullshitting you. I haven't even finished my autobiography—it's seven hundred and fifty-eight pages, or something like that, long already—and already I been asked by the Disney people about it. They want to make a movie of my life. Well, I can't blame them. When you hear my story you will be amazed. *Amazed.* It's an amazing story. To put it as simply as I can, let me just say this: there probably isn't a single major thing that has happened in the last ten years that I haven't been right in the middle of: Iran-Contra, Ollie North, October Surprise—all of it, all of it. Christ, the bullshit I've seen! Curl your freaking hair."

I—US VERSUS THEM

Paranoia was always big, but this is something new.

The reason the story of Bob Fletcher's life is of interest to others besides students of the fringe begins with the fact that Fletcher is not all that unusual. He is a stranger *of* a strange land, warped not against his culture but by it, and the curve of his warp follows the curve of the culture; it is only steeper and continues farther, off the edge of the graph. What Fletcher believes is nothing but an extreme manifestation of views that have long been shared by both the far right and the far left, and that in recent years have come together, in a weird meeting of the minds, to become one, and to permeate the mainstream of American politics and popular culture. You could call it fusion paranoia.

Although fusion paranoia draws from, and plays to, the left and the right, it rejects that bipolar model for a more primal polarity: Us versus Them. In this construct, the Us are the American people and the Them are the people who control the people—an élite comprising the forces of the state, the money-political-legal class, and the producers of news and entertainment in the mass media. From this fundamental assumption, fusion paranoia builds to an array of related beliefs: that the governing élite tells lies as a matter of course; that it is controlled by people acting in concert against the common good and at the bidding of powerful interests working behind the scenes; and that it routinely commits acts of appalling treachery.

What the historian Richard Hofstadter called "the paranoid style" has always been strong in American culture. But what is happening now is, in a large way, new. To understand why, it helps to define more particularly the American model of political paranoia. The American model, in contrast to its European antecedents, has never been primarily about conspiracies of race or religion or class but, rather, about the betrayal of the central faith and promise of America—the ideal of democracy. What American political paranoia posits is that sinister, antidemocratic forces have wormed their way into the inner workings of the government and have subverted it to serve not the interests of the nation but those of a powerful few—have turned the instrument of the people against the people. This fearful idea has animated American political movements ranging in diversity from the Antimasons, organized in the eighteen-twenties in opposition to a presumed Freemason conspiracy, and the anti-Catholic, anti-immigrant Know-Nothings of the mid-nineteenth century, to the Populists of the late nineteenth century, the American Communist Party of the nineteen-twenties and thirties, and the anti-Communist McCarthyism of the early nineteen-fifties.

But the conspiracist appeal was always limited. Apart from the Populists, whose radical democratic ideas outlived the party, the other movements came to little. The Antimasons were born into this world in 1826 and had passed from it by the late eighteen-thirties. The Know-Nothings lasted only a decade, and enjoyed just three or four years of real popularity. Huey Long's Share-the-Wealth movement and Father Coughlin's National Union for Social Justice were serious forces for less than five years during the Great Depression. When Hofstadter wrote, in 1964, he could accurately say that in this country (as opposed to Fascist Germany or Communist Russia) "the paranoid style is the preferred style only of *minority* movements."

Since then, however, the paranoid style has been (to extend Hofstadter's psychological interpretation) internalized. In its extreme form, paranoia is still the province of minority movements, but the ethos of minority movements—antiestablishmentarian protest, the politics of rage—has become so deeply ingrained in the larger political culture that the paranoid style has become the cohering idea of a broad coalition plurality that draws adherents from every point on the political spectrum—a coalition of fusion paranoia. For one reason or another, and to one degree or another, the paranoid view of government and of government's allies has become received wisdom for many millions of Americans.

At its broadest level, fusion paranoia is entirely rational. There is a governing élite. Its interests and values are often radically different from those of the ordinary citizens, and this élite does indeed work to advance those interests and values in antidemocratic fashion. Four years ago, the Kettering Foundation, which studies government and public policy, explored the reasons that Americans had become disgusted with politics. It would be hard to quarrel with the realistic vision of politics articulated by the voters interviewed. "People talk as though our political system had been taken over by alien beings," Kettering's president, David Mathews, wrote. "Many Americans do not believe they are living in a democracy now! . . . They don't believe that the average citizen even influences, much less rules. . . . They point their fingers at politicians, at powerful lobbyists, and—this came as a surprise—at people in the media. They see these three groups as a political class, the rulers of an oligarchy that has replaced democracy."

This widespread perception is the source of the bipartisan rejection of the governing class that has been the hallmark of the politics of the nineteen-nineties. Its apotheosis was the 1994 elections, which saw the repudiation of a national Democratic power structure that had been in place for generations and the rise of a popular movement toward smaller, weaker central government. What distinguishes this legitimate view of reality from the surrealism of Fletcher's New World Order is only a matter of degree. Where the realists see tacit collusion among members of the governing élite, the radicals see flagrant, treasonous plots. But the root of the paranoia—the belief that government isn't working in the interests of the people—is the same, and it is on that common ground that populism and conspiracism, healthy mistrust and crackpotism, meet. You can hear this distant echo of sanity in the voice of one small madman of the people, as Fletcher lectures an audience of one, his soliloquy loud and tinny against the strong silence of Noxon on a Sunday afternoon.

"They call us radicals," Fletcher said. "How come they don't call Bill Clinton a freaking radical for passing an executive order to steal twenty-one billion dollars from the American people, telling their Senate and Congress to go to hell, and sending it to his Mexican banking friends? . . . We don't want to hear about left and right, conservative and liberal, all these bullshit labels. Let's get back to the idea of good guys and bad guys, righteous government—the honest, fair, proper, American government that all of us have been fooled into believing was being maintained."

Fletcher's conviction that the right and the left must converge to fight their common enemy—the governing élite—is the guiding philosophy of the rapidly growing alternative media that traffic in conspiracism. Here, the conspiracists put aside their ideological differences and meet in paranoia.

Literally, they meet in *Paranoia*, the magazine. They also meet in such publications as *Flatland*, *Spotlight*, *The New Federalist*, *NEWSPEAK Katta-Zzzine*, *Steamshovel Press*, *Nexus*, *Crash Collusion*, *Behind the Barricades*, *Conspiracy Update*, *The Probe*, *The Eye*, *Incite Information*, *EXTRAPHILE*, *Flashpoint*, *Trajectories;* in publishing houses such as IllumiNet Press, III Publishing, Victoria House, S.P.I. Books, Aries Rising Press, Feral House; in the bookstores-by-mail of America West, Flatland Books, and the Ruling Class/Conspiracy Research Resource Center; in computer databases such as CIABASE and NameBase; on the Internet in the news-groups alt.CIA and alt.conspiracy.

Some of these entities are old and established, and represent an identifiable ideological point of view; some of them are on the extreme edge of paranoia, while others are more or less sober in content and tone. But most of them are only a few years old—upstarts of the information highway—and the most interesting of them are radical and explicitly fusion-oriented, rejecting the right-left dichotomy. Three on the cutting edge—and a strange place that is—are *Paranoia*, *Flatland*, and *Steamshovel Press*. These magazines are essentially of the left, but they publish and advertise much of what the right has to offer, too, as long as it is conspiracist, radical, and antigovernment. They present the world according to Noam Chomsky and Jerry Rubin and Timothy Leary and Oliver Stone and William Burroughs and Ramsey Clark and Allen Ginsberg. They also present the world according to the John Birch Society and Lyndon LaRouche and Nesta Webster and the Holocaust revisionist Eustace Mullins and retired Lieutenant Colonel James (Bo) Gritz, the far-right conspiracist-populist-survivalist of Almost Heaven, Idaho.

In this world of pure fusion paranoia, the Jonestown massacre is linked to the murder of Martin Luther King, Jr., Woodstock never happened (it was faked by the media); J. Edgar Hoover set up Teddy Kennedy at Chappaquiddick; government agents are brainwashing Americans through drugs and mesmeric techniques; Dan Rather's "Kenneth, what's the frequency?" mugging is traced back to the CBS News anchor's "extremely curious behavior in Dallas, Texas, on November 22, 1963"; Newt Gingrich is a secret Rockefeller Republican; AIDS is a government plot to kill off blacks and homosexuals; and the environmental movement masks a plot by the Rothschilds to gain control over all the land on the planet.

There is no left and no right here, only unanimity of belief in the boundless, cabalistic evil of the government and its allies. In a characteristic *Paranoia* article, the writer Mark Westion argues a New World Order theory quite similar to that of the rightist militia movement—a "shadow government" operating behind the scenes, George Bush and Bill Clinton as puppet Presidents, the Gulf War as a vast scam to enrich the Bush family—except that Westion is coming at the subject from the vantage point of hippie nostalgia, an attitude not ordinarily associated with the militias. In Westion's theory, the government not only intentionally killed the Branch Davidians and shot up the family of the white supremacist Randy Weaver in Idaho but it also orchestrated the 1970 Kent State shootings, built up the Latin-American cocaine cartels, and introduced disco—all for the purpose of ending the Age of Aquarius.

Chip Berlet, a writer for Political Research Associates, in Cambridge, Massachusetts, has extensively researched what he calls the "ideological cross fertilization" among groups and activists on the far right and the far left. Berlet's work, published in a monograph and several articles, has portrayed a complex and growing network of alliances between right-wing and left-wing activists and groups, who border on respectability and attract media attention. Among the connections: the left-leaning conspiracist and attorney Mark Lane has represented the extreme-right Liberty Lobby; the rightist LaRouche operation participated in a leftist demonstration against the Gulf War.

Consider also the two most sharply opposed camps on environmental issues. On one edge of the divide, most visibly represented by the antigovernment "Wise Use" movement, anger over environmental policies that limit land use has hardened into full-blown paranoia. The Sahara Club USA, an anti-environmentalist group based in Baja California, represents the epitome of this view. The club's philosophy, reflected in its newsletter, begins with the premise that government officials, paid-off politicians, and the national press are involved in a conspiracy comprising "New Age nuts, militant vegetarians, anti-gun pukes, animal rights goofballs, tree worshippers, new world order pushers, human haters, pro-socialists, doom-sayers, homosexual rights activists, radical eco-Nazis, slobbering political correctness advocates, militant feminists and land closure fascists." According to the Sahara Club, all the elements of this conspiracy—including the government officials—should be treated as "the enemy."

On the other edge, radical environmentalists see the same corrupt conspiracy as the Wise Users, but in a mirror image. For them, the governing élite (even the governing élite of environmentalism) exists to serve the interests of the land-raping corporations that support the major political parties. "Once revered and feared as the most effective public interest movement in America, the environmental movement is now accurately perceived as just another well-financed—and cynical—special interest group, its rancid infrastructure supported by Democratic Party operatives, and millions in grants from corporate foundations," writes the environmentalist Jeffrey St. Clair in a recent *Earth First!* article.

II—OUT OF THE MARGINS

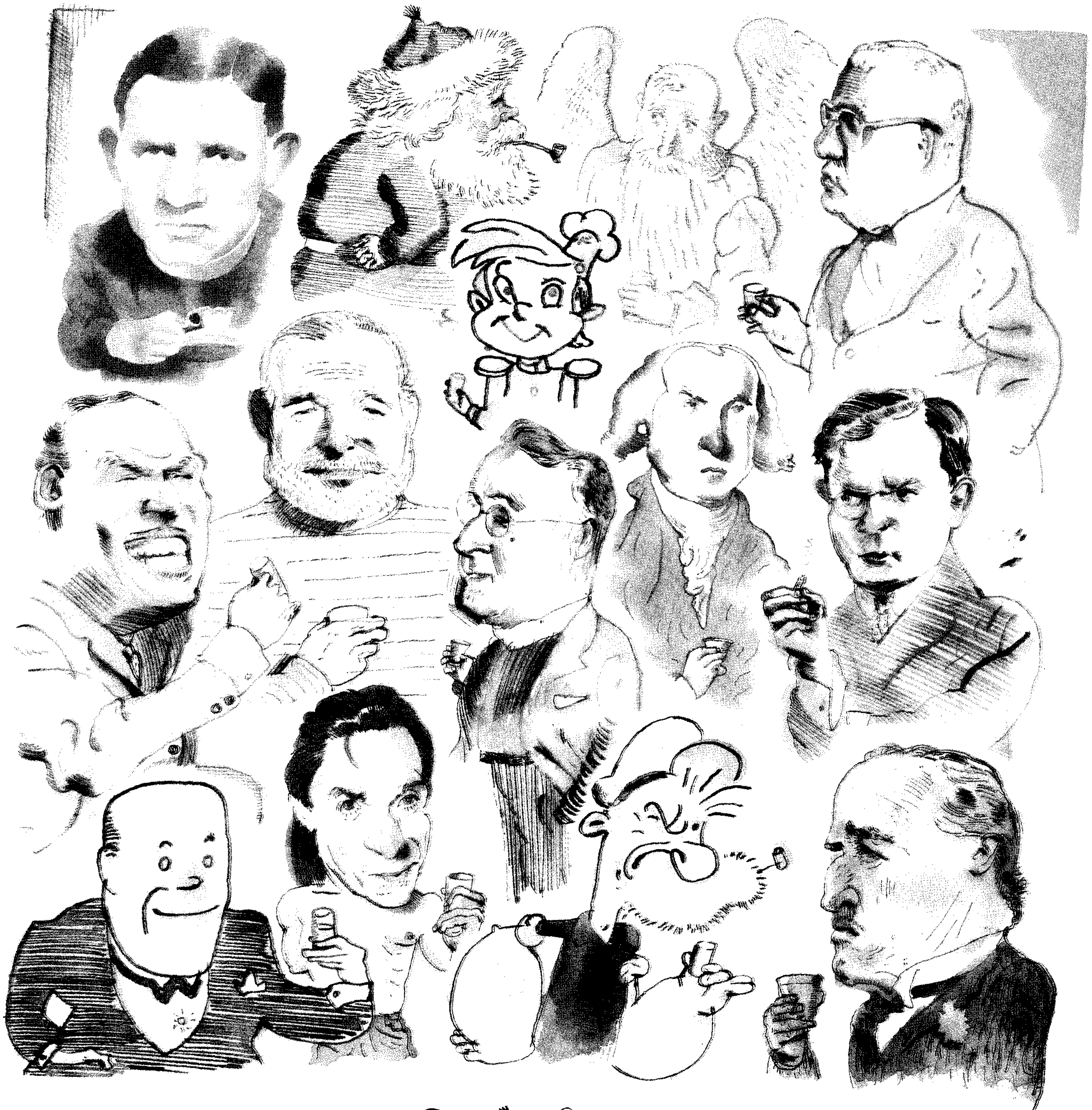
With Perot, paranoia went national.

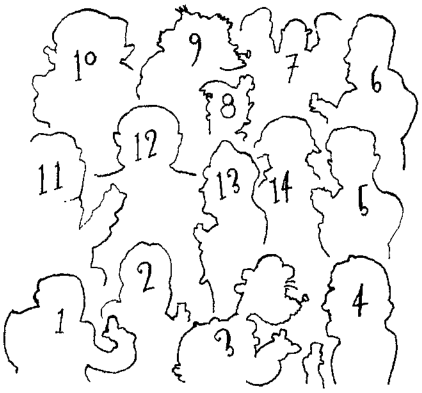
CONVERGING from the far reaches of the ideological spectrum, fusion paranoia is not only obliterating many distinctions between the left and right but is also seeping into the political mainstream. Even moderate conservatives see an implicit conspiracy among liberals in government, the academy, the press, and Hollywood. And liberals see a conspiracy among conservatives in government, corporate interests, and the forces of bigotry. In feminist theology, the idea that half the population conspires against the interests of the other half is not uncommon. Among African-Americans, paranoia seems to have become something close to a defining attitude. According to a 1990 poll, sixty per cent of blacks do not reject the idea that the government intentionally spreads narcotics into black communities; another survey found that a third believe that H.I.V. was produced by scientists and disseminated through black neighborhoods for the purpose of genocide.

One way to put in context the degree to which political paranoia has worked its way into the culture at large is to consider the kinds of allegations that have been almost casually made against a figure at the heart of American politics and government—the President. The current holder of that office, Bill Clinton, has been accused in books, videotapes, publications, and speeches of complicity in (a) a drug-smuggling and gunrunning conspiracy directed by the C.I.A. out of an airport in Mena, Arkansas; (b) the murder of his close friend Vincent Foster; (c) the murder or beatings of people who threatened to expose his many illegal and improper activities as Governor of Arkansas; (d) the Bank of Commerce and Credit International financial scandal; and

SKETCHBOOK · BY BARRY BLITT

FATHER'S DAY OFF



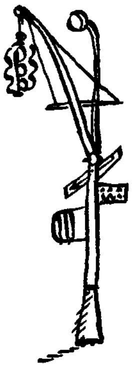


1. Daddy Warbucks
2. Iggy Pop
3. Poop-Deck Pappy
4. The Godfather
5. Dadaist Tristan Tzara
6. Papa Doc Duvalier
7. Father Time
8. Pop
9. Father Christmas
10. Spencer Tracy as Father Flanagan in "Boys Town"
11. Earl (Fatha) Hines
12. Papa Hemingway
13. Father Coughlin
14. Father of the Constitution James Madison

B. Blitt

(e) a plot to keep in office an incompetent Arkansas medical examiner because the official had covered up a death caused by Clinton's late mother, Virginia Kelley, in her job as a nurse-anesthetist.

The man who held the Presidency before Clinton, George Bush, has been publicly accused of (a) playing a key role in a 1980 conspiracy between the Reagan-Bush campaign and the government of Iran to keep American hostages in Teheran imprisoned until after the election, in order to prevent a so-called October Surprise benefitting the Democratic incumbent; (b) sending five hundred thousand American soldiers into war in the Middle East to protect Bush-family oil investments; (c) joining Clinton in the Mena conspiracy, and participating in other cocaine-smuggling schemes to finance the Reagan Administration's anti-Communist campaigns in Central America; and (d) approving, when he was director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the drug-smuggling operation run by the Panamanian strongman Manuel Noriega.



Among those who have no problem believing that two United States Presidents were involved in plots of murder and drug-dealing is Bob Fletcher. "I don't want to break anyone's balloon out there," Fletcher said. "But yes—there's too much documentation to doubt it."

It is not remarkable that accusations of abuse of power should be levelled against Presidents—particularly in light of Vietnam, Watergate, and Iran-Contra. But now, in the age of fusion paranoia, there is no longer any distinction made between credible charges and utterly unfounded slanders. Any suggestion of conspiratorial evil against a prominent politician, no matter how extreme the charge or how scanty the evidence, glides from the margins of politics to the center, on a sort of media conveyor belt that carries it from the rantings of the fringe groups of the right and the left into the respectable zone of public discourse. Political partisans and ideologues push such charges along for reasons of self-interest, and the mainstream media, which used to demand at least a modest level of proof, now requires only that the accusation be slightly laundered, by way of the tabloids or the ideological press. Thus, the stories from Arkansas accusing former Governor Clinton of complicity in criminal enterprises appear in the Right Reverend Jerry Falwell's "Clinton Chronicles" and in the pages of the right-wing *American Spectator*—and also in the left-wing *Nation*, in the New York *Post*, and in the proto-establishment *Times* of London. Similarly, the charge that Bush took part in a conspiracy to keep Americans held as prisoners in Iran in order to assure Republican electoral victory in 1980 vaulted without evidence from the mouths of proven fantasts and liars to the national press, and from two books put out by major publishers to congressional investigations happily carried out by Democrats.

In 1992, conspiracism made a dramatic entrance onto the national political stage in the person of Ross Perot, the first fusion-paranoia candidate for the Presidency. Perot was himself an example of the melding of populism and paranoid style, of legitimate critic and crackpot, of giving voice to valid grievances and hysterical fears. He believed that the North Vietnamese had engaged the Black Panthers to kill his family, and, during the 1992 Presidential race, charged that the Republicans had threatened to sabotage his daughter's wedding with the release of phony dirty pictures. Perot was an enthusiastic dabbler in conspiracy theories, ranging from the right's belief that the government was covering up evidence of American servicemen still being held captive in Vietnam to the left's fantasy about a "secret team" of ex-military men and C.I.A. officials seeking control of the government. He got nearly twenty per cent of the vote.

But Perot was only a harbinger. In the 1996 race, paranoia already has its first truly out-of-the-closet candidate, in the pugnacious form of Pat Buchanan. Over the past year, Buchanan has more and more openly embraced the idea that America is being undermined by a New World Order conspiracy, manifested by globalist free-trade initiatives like the GATT accord and the NAFTA agreement. Declaring his candidacy in his syndicated column, Buchanan wrote: "The giant explosive protests against NAFTA, GATT and the peso bailout have shown how far the U.S. establishment is detached from Middle America. No one wants their New World Order. Americans want their country's sovereignty restored and her independence reasserted." He warned that "America's culture is under attack from within." At other times, Buchanan has spoken of the "Manhattan Money Power, the one power to which neither party is any longer able to say 'No!,' " has charged that "the G.O.P. is acting less like a great party than the Political Action Committee of Goldman, Sachs," and has described the Republican-primary contest as "a battle between the hired men of the Money Power who long ago abandoned as quaint but useless old ideas of nationhood—and populists, patriots and nationalists who want no part of Robert Rubin's world."

Buchanan understands that the voters he needs to reach in order to have any impact on the Republican primaries are the same people who made Pat Robertson's book "The New World Order" a *Times* best-seller. This constituency knows exactly what Buchanan means when he writes of the Manhattan Money Power and the political influence of people with names like Rubin and Goldman and Sachs. It knows that the question "Who owns America?" is not meant to be merely rhetorical. The voters whom Buchanan is seeking are clued in to both his text and his subtext. They understand when they hear him that he is confirming his solidarity with those who believe that the international bankers and the Wall Street money men and the bought-up pols of Washington are conspiring to destroy America and usher its citizens into the New World Order of the Antichrist.

BOB FLETCHER, in his own inconsequential fashion, represents the confluence of all this. He embodies both the reality-based outrage of populism and the hysteria of conspiracism. Like many of his fellow-citizens, he has his reasons for thinking that the élite Them of America are conspiring against him. Some of his reasons are entirely personal. Some are imaginary, conjured up out of the vaporings of his agitated mind. But others are rational and real.

"A thought I have in my mind is that all of my heroes have died," Fletcher said, apropos of no question or preceding remark. "We Americans are brought up to love our country and our leaders. We believed in them, and they have lied, cheated, stolen from us; they have done atomic tests on us like guinea pigs. They have lied and lied. Look at that McNamara coming forward now with his brand-new book, telling us that the patriot movement of thirty years ago was absolutely right, and that the war was a lying, fraudulent, disgusting thing."

Although the outrage that drives Fletcher is shared by millions of Americans, not many will go as far as he has to express it. They may support a Buchanan or Perot, fight for term limits and vote for the legislative dismemberment of the federal government, but they will stop far short of even thinking about taking up arms. People like Fletcher, though, are different. They are literalists. They grow up taking at face value the lessons of the civics books and the church. They are fundamentalists. They need an order to things, an explanation of the world that is both logically and morally absolute.

The realizations that for most people are simply part of the gradual disillusioning process by which adulthood is reached—people cheat, love is fickle, governments lie, power corrupts—are for them shattering events. They overreact, wildly. They are determined to re-impose order on life, but they are also determined not to be fooled again. They question everything, and believe nothing but what is proven to their own satisfaction, until they have refigured the world. In this way, truth lies. Unfortunately, so does madness. The difference between the two is not that great. Eternal questioning leads one man to write "The Social Contract" and another to believe in the threat of the New World Order. In the end, people like Fletcher are undone by an excess of expectation and a dearth of imagination, by the failure of their country to live up to itself, and by their own failure to explain how this can have happened. They are driven to distraction, and to organizations like MOM.

III—FLETCHER'S ODYSSEY

A world made clear by Iran-Contra.

FLETCHER sat on the edge of the bed that was closer to the door in my room at the Noxon Motel, and I sat on the other bed. He lit a cigarette and took a sip from a can of Coke and started talking fast. After a short time, I got edgy watching him squirm and bounce, and asked him if he wouldn't prefer to lie back on the bed—and, to my surprise, he did. From then on, he spoke from a nearly reclining position, propped up slightly by a pillow against the backboard. Being more or less prone seemed to calm him a little; at least, his legs stopped moving.

"In 1985, I was in Marietta, Georgia, and I was running a little company which manufactured small puppets," he began. "We were doing rather well. The projections for that year were real high. I would have made at least a half a million dollars with my little company in '85, and it was my intention to expand, go on television. I would have become wealthy with it. There's no question about it."

That year, in an effort to expand, Fletcher said, he merged his business with a holding company known as Vista Joint Ventures. Vista was owned by a man named Gary Best and his wife Patricia. Fletcher said that he learned over time that Best's company was a front for a covert arms-smuggling operation dealing with Latin-American and African markets. According to Fletcher, Best was connected, in some way, to the United States intelligence community, and his arms operation was part of a network of fund-raising groups

"If I knew where I'd lost the sponge, it wouldn't be lost, now, would it?"

and front companies associated with a then unknown National Security Council staffer named Oliver North.

Fletcher said that he became unhappy about his involvement in what he increasingly came to regard as an illegal and dangerous business, and that in early 1986 he told Best he wanted out. "Basically what happened then was we had a blowup," Fletcher told me. "Best said, 'If you say anything you will be killed.' So I decided, obviously, I was going to get out of this crap. I called somebody in the F.B.I., and also attempted to call the Central Intelligence Agency." As Fletcher recalled it, none of the federal agencies was much interested in pursuing the matter, so he began his own investigation. "I contacted my lawyer, a lady friend of mine, and we started doing some snooping, flipping over rocks, and one thing led to another, and I began to realize that this was directly connected to the highest levels of government."

I have no way of knowing how much of what Fletcher says about Gary Best and the ill-fated toy company is true. Best, who is reportedly the president of a company that is prospecting for oil in the former Soviet republic of Azerbaijan, has in the past denied Fletcher's accusations. But Fletcher, who filed Freedom of Information Act requests for the government files pertaining to him, received a 1987 memorandum from the F.B.I. that he believes supports his story (although in the circular world of intelligence-gathering, Fletcher himself may have been the source for the information in the F.B.I. memo). "The office of independent counsel has developed information that Gary L. Best . . . has the modus operandi of purchasing small business operations and using the small businesses as a front to hide his real operation of purchase, sale and distribution of weapons possibly to Central American, other foreign nations, and/or unknown groups," the F.B.I. memo says. "Several small businesses have been victimized by Best. One was a toy company originally owned by Robert B. Fletcher . . . who currently resides in Orlando."

Whatever the ultimate truth is, there is no doubt that Fletcher is sincere in his views about Gary Best and the loss of the toy company, and that these views started him on the journey of radicalization which would take him eventually to paranoia. "Who is Gary Best?" Fletcher raves in his unfinished memoirs. "Who is the character that took over the Toy Company and used it for the C.I.A. Weapons Programs? The character that had raped my company and stole my company for the C.I.A. operations, threw me into the last few years of speaking engagements, investigations and the need to write this book!"

In his search for answers, Fletcher began in 1986 what he calls "my inquiries," which he likes to suggest were of vital importance to the nation. As Fletcher tells it, he became an important independent investigator, supplying information to Senator John Kerry's office, the Iran-Contra congressional investigating committee, and the office of Iran-Contra independent counsel Lawrence Walsh. Fletcher established what he describes as his own "network of intelligence persons worldwide," becoming a one-man clearing house for a slew of congressional investigations.

In Fletcher's world, all roads led to Fletcher. When Senator Kerry's office was investigating allegations of drug smuggling in Mena, Arkansas, "a Kerry staff member referred someone to Bob Fletcher, because I was the guy that would have all the information that she would need to get started on," Fletcher recalled, with the satisfaction of a man who has made enough of a mark on history to be justified in referring to himself in the third person. When Representative Henry Gonzalez, chairman of the House Banking Committee, needed to get to the bottom of the B.C.C.I. banking scandal, to whom, according to Fletcher, did he turn? Fletcher, naturally. And when House Democrats were investigating the October Surprise case—yes, of course, Fletcher. "I was very much into that one," Fletcher told me. "I was specifically involved with that in terms of supplying investigative research. I had more than one hundred and seventy-five documents."

In truth, Fletcher was never a congressional investigator, and, as far as I can determine, never an important asset in any investigation. Staff investigators for the Iran-Contra committee interviewed him but did not follow up on his story, and Fletcher's involvement with other congressional investiga-

"I do like Martin. For a nice, wishy-washy, passive-aggressive guy, he's great!"

tions didn't really amount to anything more than kibbitzing. Yet Fletcher found the environment of Washington in the latter half of the nineteen-eighties curiously welcoming. There have always been a lot of people like Fletcher hanging around Washington—amateur detectives pursuing stories and rumors of malfeasance and skulduggery in high places. They are the national capital's equivalent of the types who loiter in the halls of every county courthouse—people with time on their hands, who have made a hobby out of knowing why the So-and-So rape case is never going to trial, and who the important drunks are, and who is doing what to whom behind closed doors. Those whose professional business it is to know the score—politicians and lawyers and reporters—pay attention to these amateurs, even the ones who are obviously a little cracked, because they never know when somebody will stumble on one of those incredible tales that turn out to be true.

The Iran-Contra affair, which broke open shortly after Fletcher began his career in conspiracism, was perhaps the greatest example in American history of such a tale—one in which the national-security adviser to the President of the United States had actually given a birthday cake shaped like a key to Ayatollah Khomeini. The unfolding revelations of Iran-Contra gave a great and lasting boost to conspiratorial thinking everywhere in America: if this impossible scenario was true, then nothing was beyond credibility. Iran-Contra turned the nation's capital into a bazaar of fantastical stories and wild plots.

In this fun-house milieu Fletcher found an odd solace. The shock of losing his company had, I think, destroyed in him an assumption fundamental to a comfortable life—the false but necessary conviction that this is an ordered, sane, rational world. There was nothing Fletcher could do to restore his faith in the old order of things. But in the conspiracist world of Washington after Iran-Contra he found a new order—an understanding of why bad things happened to good people like Fletcher.

"Since when did my opinions become 'riffs'?"

• •

"I was listening to a radio talk show," Fletcher recalled, "and there was a guy talking about some of these same people who were in and out of my toy factory and linking them to international activities, and that blew my mind a bit. So I turned the radio up, and it was this fellow named Danny Sheehan, who was then in the process of filing this gigantic legal action against people connected with Oliver North and other persons. I contacted him, and I said, 'Gee, I heard you on the radio, and I have all these names and dates and people and places, and I don't know if they fit in or not.' What happens next is he falls off his seat. He says to me, basically, 'You're, like, right in the middle of it.' "

Sheehan, a leftist lawyer and champion of radical causes, ran an operation called the Christic Institute out of a warren of small, crowded offices in a self-consciously shabby row house on North Capitol Street. The mission of the Christic Institute was to effect social change through litigation, and in 1986 Sheehan was riding the crest of his biggest case ever—a lawsuit against a large collection of former United States intelligence and military officers who Sheehan said constituted a "Secret Team" operating a vast drug-smuggling and arms-running enterprise that had been directly involved in many of the unhappy events of American history since the fifties. Eventually, Sheehan's case was thrown out of court, and the Christic Institute would be fined more than a million dollars for filing what the judge called an action based on "unsubstantiated rumor and speculation." To Fletcher, though, the "secret team" theory offered the restitution of rationality, and he embraced it with the relieved enthusiasm of a religious convert.

From Danny Sheehan and the Christic Institute, Fletcher moved deeper into his newly ordered world. There were, he discovered, other people in Washington who were trying to find the truth, who took seriously the story of what had happened to Fletcher. One truth seeker he encountered was an ex-C.I.A. man named David MacMichael, who ran the Association of National Security Alumni, an anti-C.I.A. watchdog group. MacMichael is also a member of the Covert Operations Working Group, a small band of conspiracists, aging sixties radicals and representatives of the religious left, which meets every three weeks or so in a sunny front room in an old mansion across the street from the Supreme Court to discuss what evils the United States government—especially the C.I.A.—has been up to lately. At these meetings, Louis Wolf, the director of research for *CovertAction Quarterly*, is a regular, and so are MacMichael and Ralph McGehee, another former C.I.A. employee turned whistleblower and watchdog. A guiding spirit of the Covert Operations Working Group is Pat Tatum, who is by profession a cabdriver. Tatum chairs the meetings, and maintains the group's mailing list, working in the early mornings and at night in the house where he rents a basement room cheap from a friend. I asked Tatum once what the group meant to him, and he answered, in a soft, somewhat shy voice, "Oh, I guess there's no question that it's the most important thing in my life. It gives a certain amount of meaning and purpose to my life I wouldn't otherwise have."

At Tatum's invitation, I sat in on one meeting of the group. There were fourteen people, which was about par, I was told. The meeting ran for nearly three hours and most of the talk was earnest, dull stuff about American perfidy in Haiti and other such subjects. Still, there was a strong undercurrent of paranoia in the room, and it bubbled up now and then—most notably when it was Ralph McGehee's time to speak.

McGehee retired in 1977 after a career of twenty-five years in the C.I.A., and he has devoted himself ever since to the task of exposing the sins of his old employer. McGehee's great work, on which he has been laboring for twelve years, is CIABASE, an indexed encyclopedia of usual and unusual information about the C.I.A. McGehee works on CIABASE at least five days a week, at least four or five hours a day, in the basement office of his home, in the suburban Virginia community of Herndon.

"Whew, this is a subject I am not happy to talk about," McGehee said when his turn came to speak, late in the meeting. "I have been sort of one who's pooh-poohed dozens of conspiracy theories—you know, people who say they've got a transmitter in their tooth, they're being controlled by Langley, that sort of thing. Now, all of a sudden, I find myself in the middle of one of these things, and I feel very unusual about it." In fact, McGehee said, he had been reluctant to admit the truth to himself—that the C.I.A. was conducting a campaign to spy on him, and to turn the people of Herndon against him. "Probably the sign that was most indicative of the fact that it wasn't my imagination occurred when I went to the movies one time with a friend, and a line of people were going up to buy tickets, and I got in the line, and there was a line of people after me," McGehee said. "In front of me, all the people bought tickets, but when I got to the window the guy says, 'We're closed. We're closed.' I thought I hadn't heard him right, so I put out some money, and finally he did sell me a ticket but it was quite obvious that the staff had been prepared for me. Things after that began to accumulate. When I would go biking on the bike trail in Herndon, there would be a bicyclist or a man in a suit just standing there, with a walkie-talkie, obviously announcing my position as I went by."

After McGehee finished talking, Lou Wolf spoke. "Let me just say, Ralph, and I hope I'm speaking for all of us, that I don't by any stretch think you're paranoid," he said. "If you're paranoid, I'm made of cheese. And we all want to welcome you to the world of those who *do* believe in conspiracies."

"Thank you, thank you very much," McGehee said. "That's what I was hoping you would say."

Little organizations like the Covert Operations Working Group and the Association of National Security Alumni are hardly noticed in Washington, and most people would not take them seriously. Fletcher, however, found in this microworld of conspiracies the great gift of resurrected importance. "You know, David MacMichael, he thought my case was probably one of the most interesting of all he'd seen," Fletcher told me proudly. "I became part of that organization of his, and he wrote me up in the association newsletter probably—shit—seven times, something like that."

A revitalized Fletcher decided to give the mainstream, and the political system, one more chance. In 1990, four years after moving to Orlando, Florida, and taking a job selling recre-

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SHOWCASE

ISAAC STERN

BY PAUL GRIFFITHS

EVERY fiddle player has to be something of an aristocrat, something of a tortured soul: Paganini wrote those clauses into the job description. What's special about Isaac Stern—who celebrates his seventy-fifth birthday next month—is the quality, also, of cheerfulness. It's in the fine sustained tones that turn warmer with a gentle increase in dynamic and vibrato, warmer with the glow of a smile spreading. It's in his high-speed dazzlement, which makes the noise not of devilish laughter but of a familiar chuckle. It's in one of his trademarks: a high downbeat tucked into place just so, with a neat, collusive grin. This is plainly a man who enjoys himself, who enjoys enjoying himself, and who enjoys sharing the source of that enjoyment: delight in music.

His pleasure in the game and his generosity have been responsible for making him not only a great soloist but a great collaborator. When prominent violinists go into chamber music, the result is often miniaturized concerto. Mr. Stern, though, is a real chamber musician, whose concertos become conversations—conversations with the conductor, the orchestral players, and any fellow-soloists who happen to be around. He's made wonderful recordings of double and triple concertos: Vivaldi with David Oistrakh, a Bach concerto with Harold Gomberg on oboe and Bernstein conducting the Philharmonic, the Beethoven triple with his regular trio partners, Leonard Rose and Eugene Istomin.

But rarer still than the teamworking virtuoso is the virtuoso who'll try something new, and even encourage the new, as Mr. Stern has, in introducing and recording concertos by, among others, Peter Maxwell Davies, Henri Dutilleux, and George Rochberg. Life is good, he's been telling us all these years. Life, he's been telling us, too, is an adventure. ♦

PHOTOGRAPH
BY RICHARD AVEDON

New York City, August 24, 1993.

ational vehicles, he entered public life.

"I become a candidate for the United States Congress," Fletcher told me modestly.

"You ran for Congress?" I asked, surprised.

"That's correct," Fletcher said.

"As an independent?"

"Oh, no. I ran as a Democrat, the candidate for the Democratic Party."

"You were the candidate of the *Democratic Party*? Backed by the Party?"

"Oh, yes. Of course, they did not give me *much* backing."

It is a remarkable fact that Bob Fletcher was the Democratic candidate against Representative Bill McCollum of Florida in 1990. He ran as a liberal, and on a platform that was pretty much limited to the story of his victimization by the North conspiracy. By and large, the press treated the story, and Fletcher, with sympathetic respect. Still, there wasn't much of a positive reason to vote for Fletcher, and he lost to McCollum by a margin of twenty per cent. But even if Fletcher had succeeded in his brief career as a Democratic office seeker, it is unlikely that he would have stayed in Orlando very long. By 1989, he had become convinced that the conspiracy against him was being played out on a new and more troubling level: the shadow government, he believed, was trying to kill him.

"Yes, in 1988, when I was in the middle of my inquiries, there were two attempts to murder me," Fletcher said. "The first was, this fellow drove through my wall in Orlando, Florida. Came in, carefully selected my office, and drove through the wall and almost killed me."

The second attempt followed immediately. "The fellow who had driven the car through my wall then proceeded with Operation Part 2 on Bob Fletcher," Fletcher recalled. "He came right up to me, in an apologetic manner. Well, while he was doing it, he was excessively *manhandling* me. He shook my hand several times, touched me on the back of the neck, and grabbed my shoulder and my arm. That did not mean too much to me until approximately eighteen hours later, when I had a major heart attack. I was put into intensive care, and they ran extensive tests, and they found out that my blood had been chemically altered, and that fact is in my blood test. So I had a chemically induced cardiac by this son of a bitch."

"Your blood had been chemically altered how?" I asked.

"With a dust that is utilized in the intelligence community as an assassination chemical. It's absorbed through your pores. So that's why the funny stuff, physical manhandling, took place."

In the fall of 1991, Fletcher moved to a place far away from Washington, a place where it would be harder for the shadow government to get to him.

IV—VIEW FROM THE HILLS

"They'll come from submarines!"

THE headquarters of the Militia of Montana consists of five small, cluttered, and mildly dirty rooms in a sternly utilitarian building of sheet metal and concrete, which David Trochmann built in 1984. The building is on the edge of Noxon, which is, in turn, on the edge of America. It is high in the glorious mountains of northwestern Montana, on the far side of the Clark Fork River, which is gin clear in some lights and a pellucid bottle-green in others, and is lively with trout and muskrats. Noxon is approachable by road only over a one-lane bridge, and is surrounded by conifer forests climbing to snowy peaks and hills and descending into ravines full of elk and bighorn sheep and deer and mountain lions and black bears and hunters. It is a natural terminus to a long journey, a fine place for a final stand.

John Trochmann is a sort of natural terminus himself. Perhaps Fletcher, in his long search for order and meaning and defense against the dangers of the world, always had someone like Trochmann in some part of his mind. Trochmann is fifty-one years old, but a full, thick white beard and gray bristling eyebrows make him seem older. He has a strong, firm mouth, and brown eyes that frequently glare. He looks remarkably like the Avenging Angel of Harpers Ferry, John Brown.

Trochmann has been a conspiracist nearly all his life; indeed, he is a second-generation conspiracist. When we met—in the Landmark Café, while Fletcher was Fletcherizing the television newswomen—I asked MOM's leader when it was that he first began to think there was something drastically wrong with America. I thought he would say, "When Nixon resigned," or "When Saigon fell," or something like that.

"Well, I believe I was nine years old when I first took note of something being wrong, and that was when my dad refused to be part of the Lutheran Church anymore, because they had joined the National Council of Churches, or the World Council of Churches, whatever it was," Trochmann said. "It raised a question in my mind. Why should a little country church be part of a big international system? I was a questioning child."

In 1960, at the age of seventeen, Trochmann dropped out of high school and joined the Navy "to see the world—they didn't tell me I'd be seeing it from a porthole." On trips to Iceland and Puerto Rico, he was shocked to discover how the world saw him. "When I went to foreign countries and found out how they felt about America, I had a very, very rude awakening. They would say to me, 'Look what America has done to my country. They brought democracy here and destroyed my way of life.' . . . I began to ask bigger questions, have less trust. I started seriously studying, reading about things like the comments the Founding Fathers made when they said the government that governs best governs least."

In twenty years in the family business building race-car engines and snowmobile parts, Trochmann continued asking questions, and over time he became a full-fledged convert to New World Order conspiracism. In 1987, following his brother David, he moved to Montana, where the environment was, if not always sympathetic, at least tolerant of views like his. From the mid-nineteen-eighties on, the tristate region of northwestern Montana, the Idaho panhandle, and eastern Washington attracted a whole range of antigovernment and white-supremacist movements: the Church of Aryan Nations, the White Aryan Resistance, the Freemen movement, the County movement, Posse Comitatus, Christian Identity, the Tax Protest movement, and the Constitutionalists. Trochmann flirted with at least one of the groups. He was a speaker at a 1990 Aryan Nations Congress but he says he never joined the Aryan Nations, and he did not become prominently identified with any of the others. He needed an organization—and a vision—he could call his own.

In August, 1992, there occurred an event that provided Trochmann with what he needed, the answer to the question of where it was all, finally, heading. Fifty miles from Noxon, outside the tiny town of Naples, Idaho, federal agents set out to arrest a forty-four-year-old survivalist and white supremacist named Randall Weaver. As the federal agents moved in, Weaver holed up in his small cabin on top of a steep, narrow hill called Ruby Ridge. On a path leading from the cabin, Weaver's fourteen-year-old son, Sam, who was armed, encountered armed federal officers. The ensuing exchange of gunfire killed a deputy marshal—and Sam. The federal agents surrounded the cabin. The next day, an F.B.I. sharpshooter killed Weaver's wife, Vicki, who had been standing in the doorway with her infant daughter in her arms. For the next eight days, Weaver and his three surviving children stayed barricaded in the cabin with Vicki Weaver's decomposing body a few feet away. At the foot of Ruby Ridge, an angry crowd of neighbors and protesters stood vigil. Trochmann was among them. "We witnessed the tyranny of government," Trochmann said. "It was a devastating event for me."

A second event, even more devastating to Trochmann, occurred on April 19, 1993, when a standoff in Waco, Texas, between the F.B.I. and the followers of an apocalyptic Christian preacher ended in the death of seventy-two people, among them twenty-four children. Waco confirmed Trochmann's most dire fears. He began organizing in earnest, taking what to him was the last logical step—the establishment of an armed militia to do battle with the forces of the shadow government. In January of 1994, the Trochmann family founded the Militia of Montana.

Fletcher, who was living in the town of Livingston, Montana, several hundred miles from Noxon, met Trochmann that month, at a Patriot meeting in Billings, where both men were speakers. Trochmann invited Fletcher for a visit to Noxon. "I went up there and spent some time with the Trochmanns," Fletcher recalled, "and I was very impressed with their humanitarian caring for each other. And not only for each other but for the rest of the country. It was a kind of intense caring that is unusual in the modern day, a genuine concern for people I had found lacking elsewhere in the country."

The idea of becoming part of MOM's family must have had particular appeal to Fletcher at the time. The year before, he and his wife of twenty-five years had separated over his conspiracist activities. "My wife wanted me to stop pursuing the bad guys, and I just felt it was too important," Fletcher explained. Fletcher returned to Livingston, but he stayed in touch with the Trochmanns. "They needed me," Fletcher said. "They would call me because of my contacts in Washington, and they would ask me to check out this or that, and I would do it."

Last August, Fletcher decided to go home to MOM. "I said to them that it was goofy to work apart, since I was doing so much for them, and why didn't I come live in Noxon, and we'd do this together," Fletcher recalled. "It was the right time for me to do that, because I no longer had any of those miscellaneous things that would normally bind you—my wife being gone. I was alone in this big house I didn't need."

Fletcher's new home had a conspicuously end-of-the-line feeling to it. From its inception, the Militia of Montana was different from like-minded groups in one critical regard.

"Don't forget to cancel my subscription to 'Modern Maturity.' "

While the others kept to themselves, MOM was, as Trochmann puts it, "very outspoken, very high profile" in its campaign to spread the militia movement across the country, primarily by means of an aggressive mail-order program. From the beginning, MOM's literature was open in its view that the point of a militia is to prepare for war against various enemies, including the government. "The security of a free state is not found in the citizens having guns in the closet," MOM's manual for forming a militia noted. "It is found in the citizenry being trained, prepared, organized, equipped and led properly so that if the government uses its force against the citizens, the people can respond with a superior amount of arms, and appropriately defend their rights." The MOM newsletter, which has become a leading periodical of the militia movement, is called *Taking Aim*. MOM's mail-order catalogue features on its cover a pen-and-ink drawing of a backwoods sniper drawing a bead on some unseen soul, and offers budding militiamen everything from biochemical-protection suits to United States military publications on the art of war (No. 424: "Sniper Training & Employment"; No. 428: "Booby Traps"; No. 433: "Small Arms Defense Against Air Attack"; No. 435: "Incendiaries").

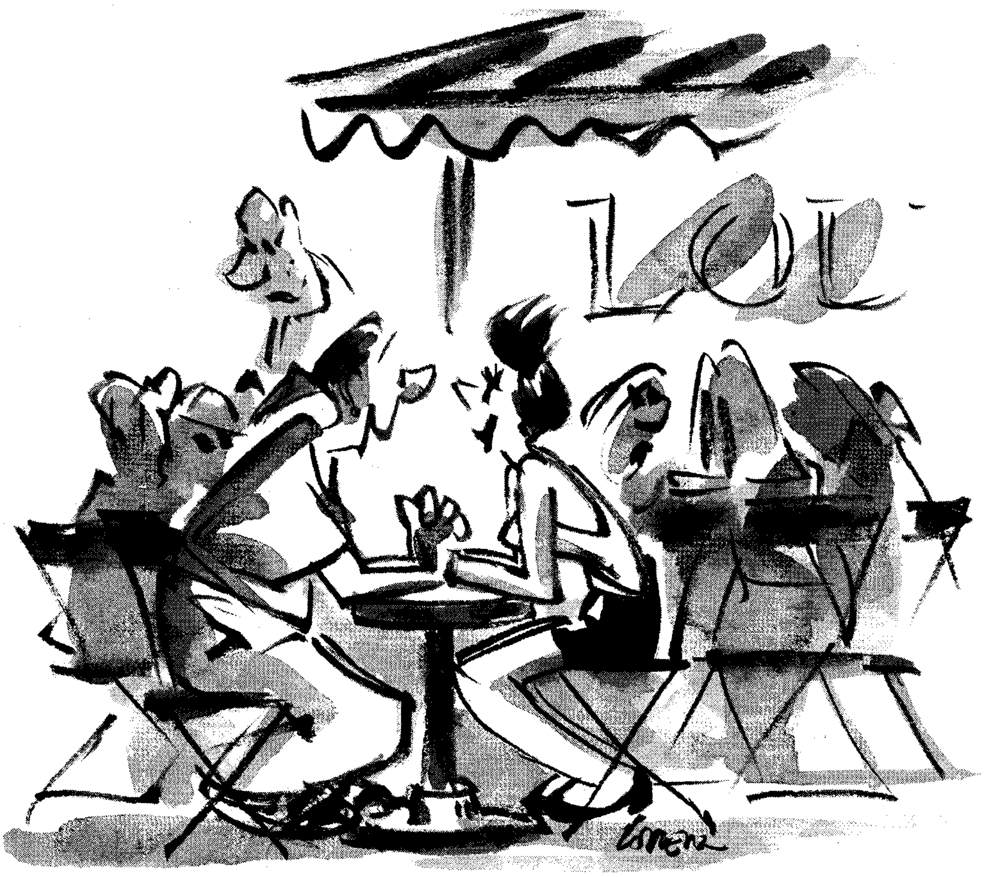
Since MOM's first week in business, there has been a steady demand for its goods. The morning I visited its offices, there were four large boxes stuffed with packages ready to go out. David Trochmann, who runs the mail-order operation and takes a cheerful pride in it, says he often fills hundreds of requests for merchandise and information per week. "I've carried as many as sixteen boxes down the hill in one day, all filled with this stuff," he said, waving his hand around at the shelves filled with books, pamphlets, and videotapes which line the walls. "Our shipping costs generally run to two hundred bucks per day, and we've had it go as high as twelve hundred bucks."

There are some who suspect that MOM is in it mostly for the money, but John Trochmann talks as if he is following a course that will end in death for somebody. He says he has no doubt of the coming attack from the government he believes is illegitimate. "I am concerned about it, like anybody else who speaks out against evils in government," he said. "I mean, these people don't want to give up the reins of the total control of their drug-running, of their slave labor, of their child-molesting and child murder. They don't want to give this up, and people like me get in the way, by exposing what they are doing."

It will happen soon; in paranoia, the moment of reckoning is always close at hand. "Oh, this is the final stage, there's no doubt about that," Trochmann rambled on. "When the troops come in, they'll come in such force it will be incredible! In forty-eight hours, they can have one hundred million troops here. They'll come out of the ground! They'll come from submarines! They'll come from air drops! They'll come from everywhere!"

When the great and bloody day comes, Trochmann says, he intends to fight, and others will fight with him. "We've had meetings about it. We've picked out strategic points, obviously," he said. "We're here to defend our community, not just ourselves, but the whole community. These hills out here, my county has about five thousand hunters, and every hunter is a sniper. And the enemy that would come in here to destroy our way of life knows that. Because I've been so outspoken for so many years, our lives aren't worth a plugged nickel anyway, so, if it comes to it, why not give it all we've got? I'm not willing to die, but I'm willing to make the other bastard die. If they come after me, I'll do my best to put them in the ground."

Trochmann, looking very much indeed like God's wrathful servant, said all this one afternoon as he was driving down a logging road in the woods near Noxon in his battered white Impala. The Impala was missing a passenger-side window from a recent encounter with the law. Plastic sheeting that had been put in its place whistled and thumped



"We're a natural, Rachel. I handle intellectual property, and you're a content-provider."

in the sideslip, and the heavy car banged up and down in the ruts of the road. On his belt Trochmann had clipped two magazines of ammunition for his Colt .45 semi-automatic, which was not in sight, but which, he said, was in the car. In his shirt pocket he carried a small two-way radio. "Many, many people—I won't say how many, but a lot—have these radios," Trochmann said, "and we stay tuned to a certain frequency, a certain channel, and our radios are always on, so if there was an armed attack—an entry of armed people that come up here to do us dirt, like they did to Waco, well, we're not going to let that happen. When these agents go off the deep end, they are our flat enemy. They deserve to be treated kind for kind. If they come in shooting people, what do you expect us to do?"

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"I had dual air bags once, but I divorced her."

It isn't clear how much of an army there really is out there in the Montana hills, waiting for Trochmann's call to arms. The state, in reaction to its growing population of extremist groups, has passed a law forbidding paramilitary training, so a visitor to Noxon is not likely to be treated to the sight of middle-aged men playing soldiers in the woods. Still, there is no question that Trochmann has adherents: he draws upward of three or four hundred people at his speeches. And he has already come close to a shooting incident—an encounter that cost his Impala its window.

According to newspaper accounts and the Montana Attorney General's office, on a Friday afternoon in March, two members of the Montana Freemen movement, Dale Jacobi and Frank Ellena, were arrested in Roundup, Montana, after sheriff's deputies discovered that both were carrying concealed handguns. Deputies also discovered a number of other weapons in Jacobi's pickup truck, including several Chinese-made SKS semi-automatic rifles with bayonets attached. A few hours later, three men believed to be affiliated with the Militia of Montana—Paul Stramer, Cajun James, and Amando Gerry Lopez—walked into the jail and accosted the deputies. One of them had a handgun under his jacket; all three were arrested. In the parking lot, deputies found Trochmann and another man locked in Trochmann's car. They smashed in the passenger window and arrested them. Charges of criminal syndicalism were filed against all seven men, but the charges (which were disputed by Trochmann and the others) were later dropped, after the Montana Attorney General's office determined that the case was probably too weak to go to trial. Perhaps the prosecutors did not want to bring the matter to court. Nobody is really that eager for Armageddon.

Just before I left Noxon, I dropped by MOM's headquarters to say goodbye. Trochmann was on his way out, heading for a meeting with the F.B.I. The Feds like to keep tabs on Trochmann, but they are gentlemanly about it, considering that they are the servants of the shadow government. A special agent drives all the way over from Missoula—a trip of three hours—and he and Trochmann have coffee together. "Oh, he's a very nice fellow," Trochmann said. "We get along fine."

There was a photographer at the headquarters, from the *Missoulian*, to take some pictures. Trochmann said he would stand still for a few shots before he left. He headed outside, and we all trailed him—the photographer, Fletcher, and I. The photographer picked out the spot he wanted—a rail fence with some grass in front of it and some trees and mountains in back—and he said, "Why don't you go stand against that and sort of lean over it, and we'll only be a minute." Trochmann, rather impatiently, moved. "No, I mean both of you," the photographer said. "I need Bob Fletcher, too."

Fletcher hurried over to join Trochmann at the fence. He leaned against the top rail, like Trochmann, and hitched up one foot, cowboy style, on the lowest rung of the fence, like Trochmann. "O.K., that's great," the photographer said. "Looking good. Smile. Keep it up. Just a few more. Great! Great! Almost done. I may not be good but I'm fast. At least, that's what my wife said." The remark struck me as a little off-color for God-fearing men, but Fletcher and Trochmann both laughed loudly, and when I left I thought that Fletcher looked about as happy and as much at home as he ever could hope to be. ♦

PROFILE

ARTIST UNKNOWN

Is it possible to become a much sought-after artist in America and still maintain independence and anonymity? Albert York, who has been defying contemporary art-world conventions for three decades—even admirers of his work weren't sure if he really existed—emerges for a rare interview.

BY CALVIN TOMKINS

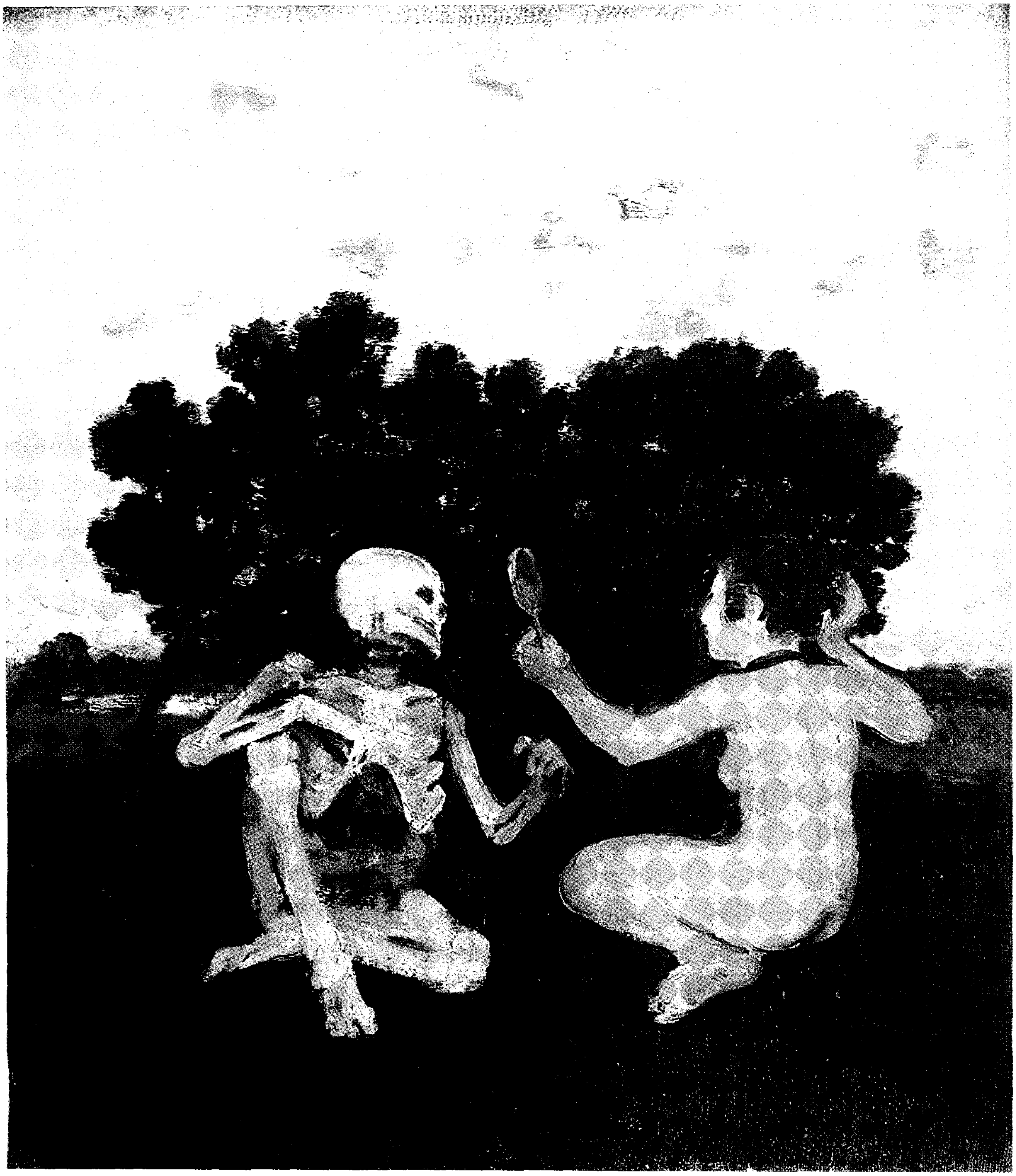
ALBERT YORK may be the most highly admired unknown artist in America. Ask any contemporary dealer or collector what he thinks of York's paintings, and nineteen times out of twenty you will get a blank stare. This is amazing when you consider that York has had twelve one-man shows in New York over the last thirty-two years (the most recent one is at the Davis & Langdale Company, on East Sixtieth Street, through June 23rd), and that his work has received very favorable and sometimes awed notices from any number of well-known critics. Reviewing York's first show, in 1963, at the Davis Galleries on East Sixtieth Street, the *Art News* critic Lawrence Campbell wrote, "His small paintings of fields, trees, ponds, a bird, a bull, a face or two, a figure in front of a wood, shine with the poetry of a Ryder; and without looking much like a Ryder, either." That is still a good description of York's work, which has changed very little over three decades. His colors are lighter than they used to be, and his paint handling is more seductive, but the scale and the format of his pictures have remained the same—slightly less than a foot square in most cases—and there has been no letup in the mysterious tension that makes his images indelible.

Those who do know about Albert York tend to be fanatical in their admiration. The painter Susan Rothenberg, who chose York for the 1984 "Artists Choose Artists" show at the CDS Gallery, on the Upper East Side, has said that she "just fell in love with the beauty and simplicity and purity of the work" and also with a certain raw, awkward quality—a sense that "each time he paints, he paints for the first time." The sculptor Robert Grosvenor owns two York landscapes, and he takes them with him, in a box he made for the purpose, when he leaves home for a few days. "I really need them around me, somehow," he told me recently. The late Jacqueline Onassis owned six York paintings, the last of which was given to her by her friend Maurice Tempelsman just a short time before she died. Edward Gorey, the artist and book illustrator, has five, and says he would buy anything of York's, sight unseen, if anything were available. (A new painting by York could bring at least twenty thousand dollars today, and quite possibly a lot more than that.) Klaus Kertess, the curator who organized this year's Whitney Biennial, wanted to include York in the show but couldn't, because the Biennial is limited to work done within the last two years and York has not released a new painting in three years. Kertess did include York's work in a three-artist show of landscape paintings at the Parrish Art Museum, in Southampton, Long Island, in 1989. He worked closely with the two other artists involved, Jane Freilicher and April Gornik, but he didn't meet York then and hasn't met him since, and at the time neither Kertess nor anyone else at the museum knew for sure whether York, who lives only a few miles away, in Water Mill, ever came to see the show.

Leroy Davis and Cecily Langdale, York's longtime dealers, have had relatively little contact with the artist in recent years. York's rate of production declined precipitously after the Parrish Museum show, and it stopped altogether in June of 1992. The Davises (Roy Davis and Cecily Langdale are married) try to buy back for the gallery any York that comes on the market. Their private collection covers all the characteristic York themes and includes several of the strange allegorical pictures that crop up in his work from time to time, such as the 1967 "Woman and Skeleton," which shows a nude woman and a skeleton seated on the ground, having what looks like an animated conversation. "Woman and Skeleton" is in some ways the quintessential York painting. Although it obviously refers to the *vanitas* theme of earlier art—the woman holds a mirror in her left hand, and the skeleton is shouldering a scythe—the picture also manages to evoke Manet in the physicality of its paint handling, while locating the viewer in a murky, moonlit landscape that is somewhat ominous and full of ambiguity. Is the woman looking at herself in the mirror, or holding it up to reflect the skeleton's features? Is the skeleton male or female? The figures strain against the confines of the twelve-by-eleven-inch picture space, and are seemingly out of scale with a clump of trees directly behind them. Nothing quite fits. The effect is monumental and humorous at the same time.

It struck both the Davises as highly unlikely that York would agree to be interviewed. To everyone's surprise, though, he did. He showed up right on time at Bobby Van's restaurant, in Bridgehampton, where I had suggested that we meet. York turned out to be a rather handsome man in a gray tweed jacket: he had white hair, greenish-brown eyes, a square face with deep vertical lines framing the mouth, and not a trace of the hunted-animal look that his reputation had more or less led me to expect. York had a slow, rather formal way of talking. There were moments

Albert York's "Woman and Skeleton," 1967 (opposite page).



PRIVATE COLLECTION, COURTESY OF DAVIS & LANGDALE CO., INC.

during our conversation that day and during a subsequent conversation when he clearly felt uncomfortable, and now and then he apologized for not answering a question adequately, but to me his answers seemed remarkably candid, thoughtful, and unself-conscious.

Albert York was born in Detroit in 1928. His parents separated soon afterward—they were not married—and York grew up believing that his mother was dead. Since his father could not take care of him, he spent the first seven years of his life in a nursery/boarding school in Fenton, Michigan, a town near Flint. York's father, Albert, Sr., was born in London; *his* parents had emigrated to Canada when he was sixteen, and he had become a Canadian citizen and served in the Canadian Army during the First World War. After the war, he came down to Detroit and found a job as a metalworker in the automobile industry.

When York was fourteen, he was sent to live with his father's married sister, in Belleville, Ontario. He graduated from high school there five years later, and enrolled in the Ontario College of Art. He had done a lot of drawing in grade school, and in high school he had taken painting lessons from a local artist. The first-year course at the Ontario College of Art was mostly drawing—drawing from plaster casts, still-life drawing, and so forth—and the first year was as far as he got, because after that his father decided he should come home and attend the Society of Arts and Crafts, in Detroit. York was awarded a scholarship for his second year there. He used only part of it, though, because he was drafted into the Army in January of 1951. York spent two years in the Army, and saw active duty in the Korean War.

Discharged in 1952, York came straight to New York. While he had been in training with an Army Medical Corps in Seattle, he met a sergeant from the Bronx who had attended the Art Students League, and he decided that this was what he wanted to do when he got out. The Art Students League fees were too high, though, so York signed up instead for the evening painting classes that Raphael Soyer was teaching, in two rooms on West Fifty-sixth Street. Soyer, whose social realism ran to genre paintings of tired shopgirls and office workers, had a sensuous touch with paint. A great admirer of Degas and the French school, he passed this admiration on to his pupils, and he was certainly York's most important teacher, but York studied with him for only a short time. He had to take on all sorts of odd jobs to pay for the lessons and for his room and board, and after four or five months he found that he was just too tired at night to paint, so he quit painting and went to work full time. He had a lot of different jobs during the next five years. He worked on trucks in the garment district, loading and unloading heavy bolts of cloth. What got him out of this dead period was going to work in Robert Kulicke's picture-frame workshop.

Robert Kulicke is famous today for designing and developing a metal picture frame that virtually took over the contemporary frame market in the nineteen-sixties. Before that, he had studied and mastered the ancient craft of wood-frame-making, and his shop, Kulicke Frames, on York Avenue at Seventy-third Street, was considered one of the best in the business. Being an artist himself—a painter—Kulicke liked to hire young artists to work for him. His best gilder was a man named Jerry Anderson, who had been in Raphael Soyer's class with Albert York; in 1957, when Kulicke needed another gilder, Anderson recommended York, and Kulicke took him on and trained him. York became a first-rate gilder, according to Kulicke—deft, careful, completely reliable, and incredibly shy. "I spent hours talking to him in the shop," Kulicke recalls—Kulicke is a world-class talker—"but I don't recall a single thing he ever said except 'Yes,' 'No,' or 'Maybe.' "

At that time, York still wasn't doing any painting or drawing. He didn't start again until 1959 or 1960. Everybody's favorite Albert York story is that his wife didn't know he was an artist until six months after they were married, when she came into their kitchen one day and saw him drawing horses to amuse one of her children. When I asked York about this, he looked mystified. He and Virginia Mann Caldwell, whom he met at a party in an artist's loft in 1959, had taken her two children on a four-month trip to France in 1960, before they were married, he said, and he had brought along his paintbox and done a lot of painting in the French countryside. Since the story came originally from Virginia, who told it to Roy Davis, it may have been simply that she did not know he was an artist when they first met; at that time, York hadn't painted for six or seven years, and he certainly did not consider himself an artist.

The trip to Europe was Virginia's idea. She had spent her junior year at the Sorbonne when she was a Barnard College student, and later on she and her first husband had lived in Paris for a time, working for the Marshall Plan. York said, with a chuckle, "She decided we were going to France, so we went to France." They spent a month in Paris, but only one day in the Louvre. ("The Louvre is so huge, and we had the youngsters with us, and they kept disappearing.") From Paris they worked their way south, and they ended up in a pension just outside Toulon. This was where York really started painting again. He took his paintbox out into the fields, like an Impressionist. The pictures he painted were nothing like Impressionism, though; they were small, concentrated, and rather dark, with a predominance of green and blue halftones. He had no interest in reproducing specific

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ZIRBELSTRASSE

She's moving out of the house now, the sticky sycamores
one after the other struck by lightning outside the picture window
that my father struck by lightning liked to keep curtained
before the lightning came for him a second time early one morning
and he lost his balance, his speech, and last of all his mischief,

the high pines that gave the street its name chopped down
by the new people, only the birches left standing,
whose thin leaves and catkins reminded me of her copper-silver hair,
the old woman upstairs with all her marbles and mobility
put in a home by her Regan of a daughter, who sold the house

over the heads of my parents, sitting-duck tenants,
bourgeois gypsies, wheeled suitcases on top of fitted wardrobes,
the windows where my sister's criminal boyfriends climbed in at night,
over the hedge the pool where the dentist's children screamed,
the old couple next door, *Duzfreunde* of Franz Josef Strauss,

the patio stones with their ineradicable growths of moss,
the weedy lawn where slugs set sail of an evening and met their ends
like Magellan, sliced up in the salty shallows of their own froth,

the potatoes my father bestirred himself to grow one year,
gravelly bullets too diamond-hard to take a fork,

moving with all the books, the doubtful assets of a lifetime,
the steel table only I had the wit to assemble and left my feet on,
the furniture and lamps picked up in border raids to Italy,
once austerely challenging, now out-of-date *moderne*,
too gloomy to read by, and sad as anything not bought old,

the Strindberg kitchen with the dribbling Yugoslav fridge,
the Meissen collection we disliked and weren't allowed to use,
the démodé gadgets for making yogurt, for Turkish coffee,
the turkey cutlets not so much cooked as made safe in the frypan
the more cooking cut corners and dwindled and became rehash,

my off-and-on kingdom in the cellar, among the skis and old boots,
my father's author's copies and foreign editions,
the blastproof metal doors, preserves, tin cans, and board games
of people who couldn't forget the Russians, the furnace room
where my jeans were baked hard against an early morning departure.

—Michael Hofmann

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landscapes. "I would see this tree or that tree, and put it down on the panel, but rearrange the whole thing," he said. "I invented it. It came to mind as I was working."

YORK and Caldwell returned to New York in the late summer of 1960, and got married in October. For the next two years, they lived in an apartment on East Eighty-fourth Street. York went back to work at Kulicke Frames, but he started going there at 5 A.M. so he could quit at around three and have an hour or so to paint before dark. He painted mostly in Central Park, on small wooden panels; sometimes he would glue canvas to them first, but mostly he painted on the wood itself. He also spent a lot of time in museums during this period. "I looked at just about everything in the Metropolitan," he told me. He liked the work of the Ashcan School painters, George Bellows and John Sloan and Robert Henri and George Luks, and he developed a reverence for Manet and Cézanne, and also for certain Old Masters—Giovanni Bellini's "St. Francis in the Desert," at the Frick, made a profound impression on him—but the painter who then excited him most was Albert Pinkham Ryder. He remembers seeing at the Metropolitan a temporary installation of paintings by Ryder, Eastman Johnson, Winslow Homer, and several other Americans. "The Ryders were the only ones that really held up, for me," he said. "They were so small, but so strong that they outdid everything else in the room. The whole universe was there in those small pictures. Ryder knew how to fit together the negative and positive forms—clouds, sky, trees, the sea. He locked it all in."

Contemporary art barely registered on York's aesthetic compass. He knew that Abstract Expressionism had become the dominant influence both here and abroad, and he also knew that it had nothing to do with him. "It was a different world," he said. "Naturally, it froze you—made you think, What are you doing with your tiny panels?" He stayed with his tiny panels, which never looked like miniatures; seen from a distance, they had a monumental presence that caught and held the eye. Jerry Anderson saw a few of them, and persuaded York to show them to Bob Kulicke. "I immediately saw it was terrific work," Kulicke recalls. "You know, I'm a good painter, but Al is a great painter. Better than I am, the prick." Kulicke got in touch with his friend and colleague Roy Davis, who ran a small art gallery that had started out as a showroom for Kulicke Frames, and told him about Al York. Davis had also wanted to be a painter; he and Kulicke had been classmates at the Tyler School of Art, in Philadelphia. Although Davis no longer painted, he had a keen eye for the sort of painterly touch that was rapidly becoming obsolete in art, and he immediately invited York to join the gallery. This was in 1962, the year Pop art broke into the clear as a rambunctious antidote to Abstract Expressionism. Al York and the mainstream of modern art were headed in opposite directions.

Davis gave York his first show the following March. It got good reviews (including Lawrence Campbell's in *Art News*), and most of the paintings were sold, at prices that sound ridiculous today—a hundred and fifty to four hundred dollars—but were respectable then. York and his wife and his two stepchildren had left the city by that time and moved out to East Hampton, where Virginia's parents had a house. They rented a small house on Derby Lane, and York took the train into the city five days a week to work at Kulicke's. Eventually, the commuting got to be too much for him. He quit Kulicke's, and found work painting houses and doing rough carpentry in the East Hampton area. He also painted a lot of pictures in those years, partly "to keep the income going, you know, support the family." Most of his pictures were on wood. There was always scrap lumber around the construction sites he worked on, and he would salvage a good-sized piece and cut it up into usable squares. Every so often, he brought his paintings in to Davis Galleries himself, unsigned and untitled, in a brown paper bag. (Later on, when he stopped coming into town, he wrapped them in brown paper and sent them by ordinary mail.) Some of his best work dates from the nineteen-sixties—the dense, brooding landscapes with two or three trees and a flash of water in the middle distance. They are simple yet compelling images that show an awareness of art history (the landscape tradition established in the seventeenth century by Claude Lorrain) but at the same time project a very contemporary sense of unease. He also painted still-lifes, farmhouses, human figures in landscapes, and cows. York tends to think of his cow pictures as "potboiling," because he often fell back on them when he didn't have another subject in mind. They were not particularly easy to like—not nearly as ingratiating to the eye as his still-lifes of flowers. An interior decorator used to come to the gallery and buy several York paintings at a time, to place in apartments she was decorating. That bothered Roy Davis—he envisioned York landscapes being used as decorative "accents" in back hallways, where nobody would ever look at them—but the Yorks obviously needed the money. They had moved into Virginia's parents' house, on Sag Harbor Road, which she had inherited. York never suggested that his prices should be any higher. Almost always, when he brought or mailed in a new painting he said that it wasn't good enough, and that he hoped to do better with the next one.

York kept in touch with his father, who had moved back to Ontario. In 1972, when the elder York was dying of cancer, he confided to his son a stunning piece of news: Albert's mother was alive. She was living in Florida, and was a successful real-estate broker there. Her husband had died recently, and she and York's father had reëstablished contact, and now she wanted to see Albert. "Meeting her for the first time was pretty rough," according to York, but he and his mother managed to work out a relationship. After his father died, in 1973, York and his mother went to Canada together to settle the estate. He did a painting of her there, sitting in the grass; her features are barely distinguishable, as is the case in most of his figure paintings. Some years later, York began receiving a small income from a trust fund that his mother had set up in his name. The Davises say that it was harder to get pictures out of him after that.

YORK'S pictures became stranger. He painted a burly semi-nude man holding a snake. (Snakes also appear in some of his landscape paintings.) He did a "Reclining Female Nude with Cat," which was a weird takeoff on Manet's "Olympia." The nude, like all York's nudes, is graceless and anti-erotic, and the cat is huge—way out of normal scale. Blocky, totemic-looking Indians appear in several paintings. One of them depicts a man in armor, an Indian, and a crocodile in a tropical setting; it was done during or shortly after a visit to his mother in Florida. The men and women in York's pictures often wear nineteenth-century clothing—long skirts and old-fashioned hats. He paints them this way, he told me, because today's clothes are so uninteresting visually. During the nineteen-seventies, York spent a lot of time in the East Hampton Library, reading books on art history. Art books and catalogues sometimes gave him ideas for paintings. Since he had no live models to pose for him (his wife wouldn't do it), he used Manet's "Olympia" instead. "I didn't copy it," he said. "Just painted from memory. That's why you get that chunky figure." He doesn't like his version much. To him it looks "like a student's piece of work."

At one point, York attended a sketch class that the artists Aaron Shikler and David Levine had started in New York, with live models who would hold the same pose over a number of sessions. York felt that he needed to do more drawing, even though he never used drawings as preliminary studies for his paintings. At the first sketch class he attended, though, a sociable colleague came over to look at what he was doing, and York picked up his things, walked out, and never went back.

It was ironic, his living out there on the East End of Long Island with all the wealthy collectors and dealers and successful artists, not to mention the stockbrokers and the virtuosos of arbitrage. York had no contact with any of them. Fairfield Porter, who was a respected critic as well as an artist, looked him up in the nineteen-sixties. Porter put York in a 1965 group show at the Parrish Art Museum, in Southampton, and he wrote a brief essay for the catalogue of York's 1975 show at the Davis & Long Company. (Roy Davis had gone into business with Meredith Long by then, and they had opened a large and ambitious gallery on Madison Avenue.) York and Porter had two or three conversations, but that was it; they did not become friends. Some people wondered whether Albert York really existed. There was speculation that he might be a pseudonym for an established artist with a reputation for working in a completely different style.

The Yorks moved away from the East End in 1981. Virginia sold the house on Sag Harbor Road and bought an old house in Philadelphia, to be near her daughter. York rented a studio nearby, but nothing felt right about it, and after three months he gave it up and moved back to Long Island. For the next two years, he and Virginia lived separately, getting together occasionally on weekends or holidays. York lived in rented houses in the East Hampton area and, for a few months, outside Narragansett, Rhode Island. Living alone, with only a dog for company, seemed to make him much more productive. Some of his strongest paintings date from those two years: "Carnations in a Blue Can with a Beetle in a Landscape," for example, and "Three Red Tulips in a Landscape with Horse and Rider." These paintings introduce a new element—still-life juxtaposed with landscape. In each of them, a floral still-life is placed in the foreground of a landscape, with unsettling results: the flowers seem huge, and they make the background even more miragelike than it usually is in York's landscapes. In the second painting, three gigantic, Brobdingnagian tulips dwarf a shadowy horse and rider (Ryder?) just entering the picture from its right edge. The picture reads like a hallucination—real and unreal held in the same taut embrace.

SEVERAL times during our conversations, York referred to his work as being out of date. "The modern world just passes me by," he said wryly, without self-pity. "I don't notice it. I missed the train." But during the eighties the modern world kept rediscovering Albert York. His prices rose steadily; by the middle of the decade Davis was selling his paintings for five thousand dollars and more. Although York barely registered in the booming, publicity-mad art market of the period, the people who bought his work now tended to be involved with contemporary art—people like Susan Rothenberg, and the future dealer Matthew Marks (he started buying York paintings in 1983, when he was a twenty-year-old college student), and the avant-garde collectors Carl Lobell and Werner Kramarsky. Kramarsky bought "Three Red Tulips in a Landscape with Horse and Rider" in 1982 and the "Olympia" painting in 1984. Several museums became interested in York's work around that time. The Cleveland Museum acquired "Bird with Dead Moth." The Boston Museum of Fine Arts mounted a small Albert York exhibit in 1982, and the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston included York in a group show called "American Still Life 1945-1983," which went on tour to four other museums; Linda Cathcart, the Houston museum's director, wanted to do a full-dress York retrospective, but she also wanted to meet the artist and discuss it with him, and that, apparently, was asking too much. In spite of all this activity, most people seemed not to have heard of Albert York. It almost proved that if you really wanted to be left alone you could be. A lot of East Enders read and discussed Virginia York's letters to the editor of the East Hampton *Star* about world mythology. (Virginia York, who also writes poems, has been working for years on a book about mythology.) Very few of the local people knew then or know now that her husband is an artist.

York had not been consulted about any of the museum shows in which his paintings were included. The curators worked through Roy Davis, who has become, over the years, more and more protective of York's privacy. By 1982, Davis was no longer in partnership with Meredith Long, and in 1985 the gallery had moved back into its original quarters, at 231 East Sixtieth Street, under the name Davis & Langdale Company. When Klaus Kertess decided to put York in his 1989 show of three Long Island landscape painters at the Parrish Art Museum, the Davises discouraged him from trying to get in touch with York. They were afraid that if York knew about the show in advance he might refuse to be in it. York did go to see the Parrish Museum show, shortly before it closed, and the experience was deeply painful for him. "I felt pretty upset about what I'd been doing for these last years," he told me. "It's pretty lousy—pardon the word—work. Pretty bad. It has no relation to good painting. I don't recognize myself in those things. I would like to do better. But, of course, it's there, and probably I will never be able to change it."

Since "those things" included what York's admirers consider to be some of his most powerful work—early landscapes, "Woman and Skeleton," "Reclining Female Nude with Cat," "Three Red Tulips in a Landscape with Horse and Rider"—his reaction is hard to fathom. My impression was that York's notion of an acceptable painting hovers somewhere near the level of Bellini's "St. Francis in the Desert." It may be that he truly has no idea how good his own work is, although that would suggest a naïveté that his intelligence belies. The last Parrish Museum show more or less stopped him in his tracks, at any rate, and he has been struggling ever since to find his way again. "I just don't know exactly where I am right now," he said, "or where I'm going."

When I asked what it was about his work that he found so inadequate, he mentioned scale and color—he would like his paintings to be larger and more colorful. "I'm a black-and-white painter," he said. Black and white? "Well, light blue and dark green. Raphael Soyer tried to get me out of it. There are no reds in there, no oranges, no complement to the blues. I looked at the catalogue of a Seurat show a few years ago. Wonderful painter, marvellous with color. His little panels vibrate, they come to life. You look at one of my things and it's really dead."

The last painting that York sent in to the gallery was a still-life of flowers, lusciously painted, with delicate greens, light blue, peach, rose, and a good deal of yellow ochre. That was three years ago. Roy Davis has a mental image of York laboring on a picture and then scraping it down to the bare wood over and over again. York was often inclined to scrape his panels down and start over; in the past, he used to tell the Davises that he was finishing a still-life, and two weeks later they would re-

"He picked up some kind of anger in England in the late fifties, and he's never been able to shake it."

ceive a cow painting. "What Al doesn't understand is that in art you never hit what you're aiming at, but the difference may not be downward," Bob Kulicke says.

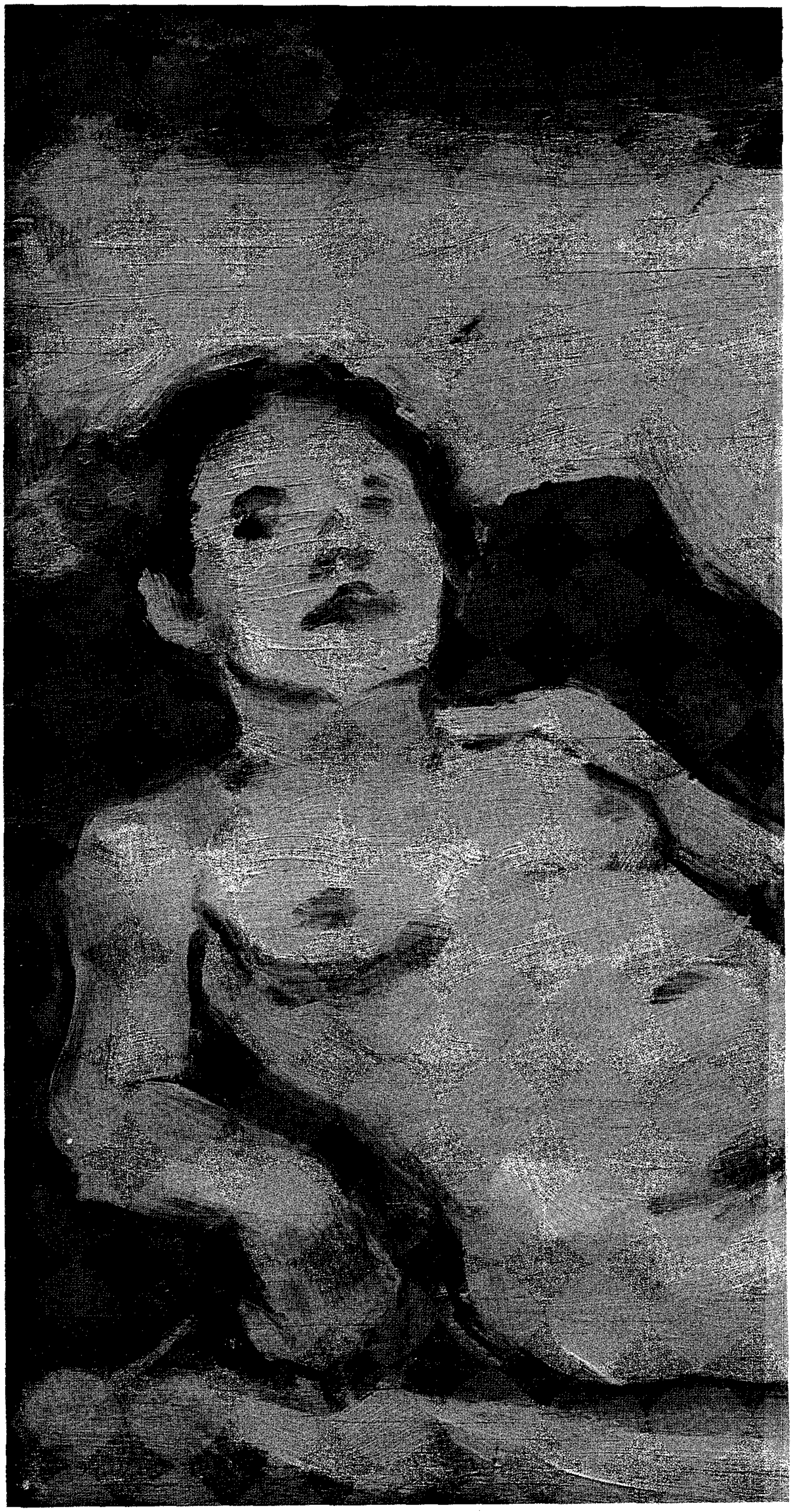
York conceded that he had been doing a lot of scraping down lately. He also gave me the impression that he worked every day. "I work in the basement right now, in the underworld," he said. "I get the early-morning sunlight through a couple of basement windows. I'm an early riser—up at 4:30 or 5 A.M. I get my New York *Times* in Southampton—you can get it early at the 7-Eleven. I take a look at the world and have a cup of coffee, and then I get to work."

I decided to ask him the impossible question: Why do you paint?

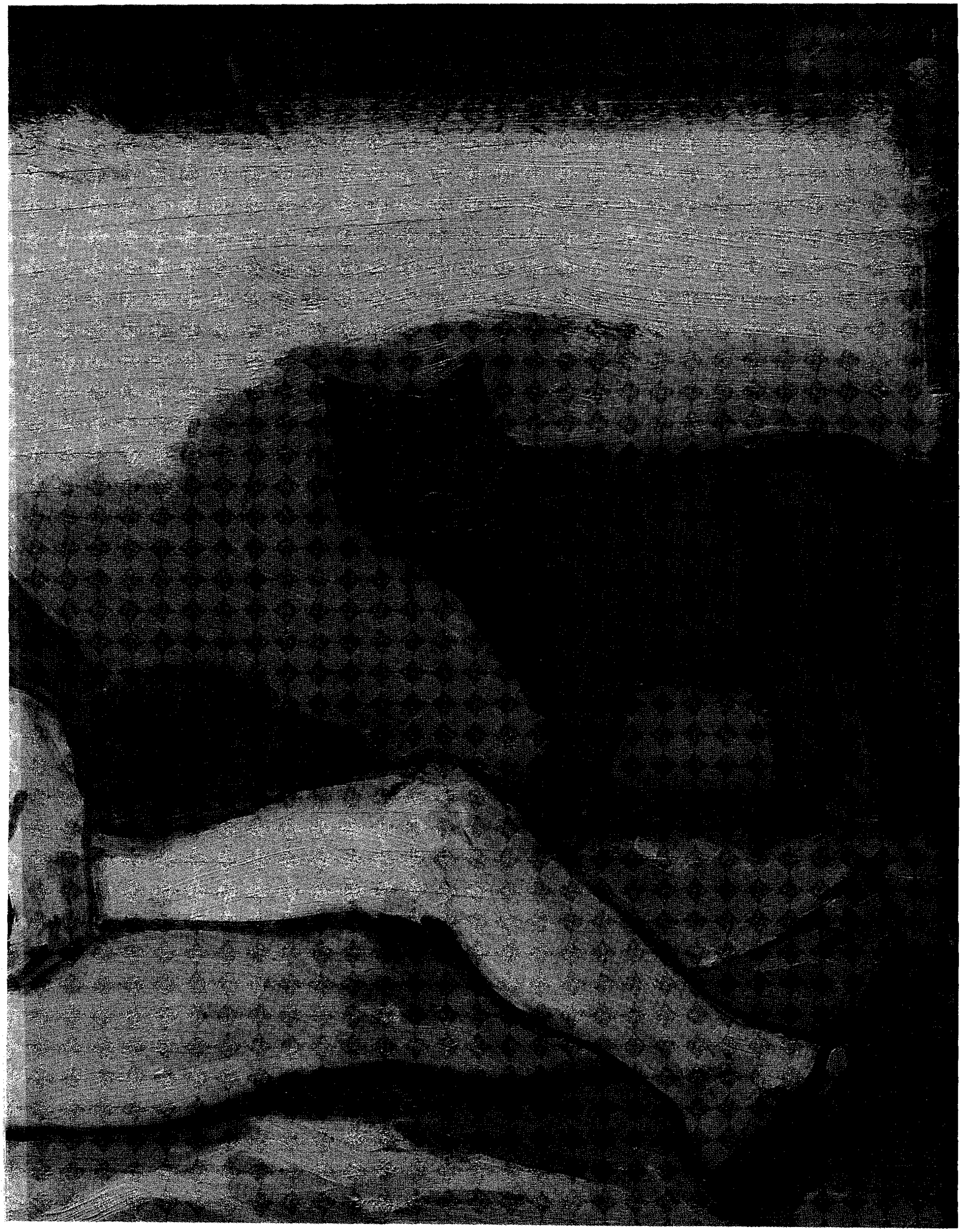
"I knew this was going to be difficult," he said, sighing. He put his cigarette out, slowly, and looked at the table. "I think we live in a paradise," he said. "This is a Garden of Eden, really it is. It might be the only paradise we ever know, and it's just so beautiful, with the trees and everything here, and you feel you want to paint it. Put it into a design. That's all I can say. It's been a rather trying business, this painting."

Had he ever found any real satisfaction in his work?

"Not really," came the slow reply. "Not really. Only one panel, maybe, one of the first I ever gave the Davises. It's a young woman with an arm or a hand on a tree, and there are some bushes, and a couple of other trees. I had red, green, blue, purple, and yellow—about the whole palette in that little panel. The drawing was good, a good rendering of the figure. It was our first summer in East Hampton after moving out from New York City, and out back of the house we had rented, in the next lot, there was a woman standing there, looking at her garden, and she had her hand up like that. She didn't see me. I stood there and memorized it. And then, about a week later, I went out there and put my paintbox down on the grass and painted it from memory. There was another element in my motivation, which is that my wife was mad as the devil at me at the time. Something about finances. So I had to get that bloody panel in to the Davises. Anyway, I sat down and did this thing, and it was one of the only things I really had satisfaction with." ♦



COLLECTION OF SARAH-ANN & WERNER H. KRAMARSKY, COURTESY OF DAVIS & LANGDALE CO., INC.

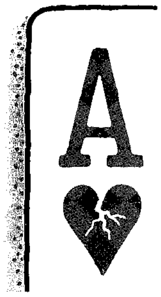


"Reclining Female Nude with Cat," 1978.

FICTION

ANACONDA

BY MARTHA McPHEE



ANTON pinned money to our bedroom doors. Fives, tens, twenties. Once, we got a fifty. The bills smelled acrid and wonderful, and there was something dusty about the way they felt on your fingers. The scent of them got into my hands the way garlic does, and I started to sniff my hands all the time, just to smell that smell.

Monday nights were Anton's poker nights, and Tuesday mornings, early, when it was still gray and misty outside, I'd check my door. Finding the money sent a rush through me, like the thrill of finding an Easter egg—the good kind, stuffed with cash.

It was the spring of 1970. I was eight years old; my sister Julia was ten, and my sister Jane had just turned twelve. Our father had left home the year before, and now our mother was falling in love with Anton, who drove a turquoise Cadillac with windows that hummed like flies as he put them up and down. He played in high-stakes poker games, with hundred-dollar antes and thousand-dollar chips. He played with a group of real-estate pirates, and a local policeman, who didn't ticket Mom the time when he'd pulled her over. "Practiced men who play in the Islands and in Las Vegas. Some of them are worth three hundred million dollars," Anton said, squinting and winking. He was always squinting and winking. It made you feel as if he were including you in something big and mischievous. "I play with a man, Mickey Eager, who's worth so much he doesn't trust the banks," he went on. "Keeps all his money in gold Krugerrands—fifty thousand of them, buried in his back yard."

There was something dazzling about a man worth so much money. My father had told me once that a human body wasn't worth much. He said that maybe the total value of the parts—heart, lungs, liver, kidneys, blood—would be around a dollar and a quarter in a scientific laboratory.

Julia put her money from Anton toward ballet lessons. With mine I bought rocks and minerals for my collection. Jane left hers tacked in one long snaking strip to her bedroom door. Only a few bills disappeared, borrowed by Mom for groceries. Jane didn't trust Anton. She said he'd never leave his wife. She was a Texas oil heiress who'd been some sort of a nun when she'd met Anton. Jane and Julia called her "the wife." I called her "the nun." I liked thinking of her in a black habit, with those thick strips of white banding her face and neck.

The first bill on my door was only a five, but it seemed large at the time and beautiful, scrolled with important designs and faces and buildings. Thin white lines webbed over green, like lace. A red pushpin tacked the bill to my door, and when I saw the money I felt guilty because I wanted to steal it. It didn't occur to me that it was mine. The hall that morning was quiet and cold. Down at one end, Mom's door was closed, bolted from the inside, because Julia was always trying to pop the lock with knitting needles or straightened-out hangers. She wanted to prove that Anton had been in there and had spent the night with Mom. Julia told us that you could smell it when Mom had had sex. She said sex smelled like bad breath.

Nothing got by us. In the mornings, from the school bus, we'd see Anton's Cadillac parked in an overgrown lane not far from our house, hidden beneath the branches of a willow tree, reminding me of a boat I'd seen submerged in the shallows of a lake.

In the hall that morning, I thought about the three of us behind my mother's door, in bed with Mom watching the late, late movies after Dad had left—how we didn't do that anymore. The house creaked, scaring me. I stared at the five-dollar bill, my skin in goosebumps. I noticed Jane's door and then Julia's, each with money pinned there, the same as mine, so I snatched the bill.

"ACT smart when he's around," Mom would say. "He's an intellectual, a thinker. He's a philosopher, writing the definitive treatise on the psychology of love."

"But he's married," Jane said to Mom one day. We weren't suppose to talk about that, but now Jane did, all the time.

"Don't be difficult," Mom said. She pushed her thumbnail into her lip, running her eyes over us. We knew that the nun lived in Europe now, with their children, and Mom worried about her coming back. She told Jane, who told Julia, who told me. Mom confided in Jane as if they were sisters, and sometimes it seemed as if Jane really believed they were.

"If he leaves the wife he'll have nothing because she won't give him any money," Jane explained to Julia and me when we were alone. "Especially if she can prove he's had an affair." I didn't like thinking about Mom as an affair. Dad's girlfriend, Camille, with her long ginger hair, was an affair. Julia said Camille "oozed sexuality," as if sexuality were something liquid. I said that this reminded me of bulldog ants I'd seen on a nature program, which oozed infertile eggs called "omelettes" to feed their young.

"That's absolutely disgusting," Julia said.

"We need to protect Mom," Jane said, giving us her serious look.

When Anton started coming to our house for dinner, he brought grocery bags filled with wonderful things—Hydrox cookies, ice cream, doughnuts, slippery steaks of such a brilliant red that I was afraid Mom wouldn't let us eat them. Mom didn't care much about food, and ever since Dad left we'd been eating creamed chipped beef for dinner, every night. It was pasty and gooey, like plaster of paris, slopped over well-done

FILIP PAGOWSKI

toast, and salty because we always forgot to rinse the beef. The food Anton brought glistened like a birthday present in its cellophane packaging, and we tore into it greedily.

In the beginning, he'd take us for late-afternoon drives, getting to know us and scaring us with stories. He drove us to the site where the murdered Lindbergh baby was found. He drove us to the home of a woman who'd chopped off her mother's head. It was strange to be scared by him; it made us feel protected.

One night at dinner, Anton told us that he came from a family of murderers in Corsicana, Texas. His grandfather, Johnny Darling, had killed at least three men—two black men, shot through the brow for tipping their hats at his wife, and a white man, his brother-in-law, shot square in the back for writing an article for the Corsicana *Star* in defense of the black men. For the first two, Johnny Darling was charged five dollars for disturbing the peace. After the last, he skipped town.

"You might not believe it," Mom said brightly, "but I've seen the article." A big, inadvertent smile spread across her lips. You could tell she was proud.

"It's true," Anton said, and he nodded. "It's true." He sat forward in his chair, Dad's chair, at the head of our kitchen table. His eyes sparkled and he fingered his chin as he resurrected stories and details. I hoped we were acting smart. You could always count on Julia to act real smart. Jane slumped back in her chair and Mom shot her a look. For Mom, sometimes, it was as if our whole world depended on what Jane thought, as if Jane knew all the answers. "Clairvoyant," Julia would say.

In town Anton had a reputation. People were divided. Some thought he was grand. "Unique," they'd say. "An individual with charisma—he'd give his soul to help you out." Others suspected him. They said he had multiple wives. "Multiple wives," Julia would repeat, flexing her left eyebrow.

"They're just jealous," Mom would say. That's what she always said when anyone criticized her.

Anton was a lot of things, but to me he was a poker player, and I liked cards. I could shuffle evenly and quickly, and could deal with one hand. I knew a lot of games, but I didn't know poker yet.

ANACONDA, high and low. Up and down the river. Five-card draw. Seven-card stud. Hold 'em—a Texan game. Anton taught us the different varieties one evening over dinner. He said it would be good for us to learn poker. Poker made you tough, and we needed to be tough and to trust.

Anaconda: *Eunectus murinus*. I had learned that name at a Coney Island freak show, where they had one lying at the back of a large cage. A label over the cage said that the snakes could grow over twenty feet in length. The females could give birth to as many as seventy-five babies at once. An adult is strong enough to crush a doe, but they eat only small animals and birds. "The hug of death is how they kill," the label said.

"Whichever game you play, babes, it's all in the face," Anton said to us. "You have to know how to hold the same face all the time, regardless of your hand. Mickey Eager's the only man I've ever known to consistently hold his face." I thought about Mickey and his Krugerrands and tried to hold my face still. "An inscrutable face gives no hint of your thoughts or feelings," Anton said.

The kitchen smelled of lemon polish. Mom's Christmas cactus thrived on a windowsill, in full fuchsia bloom; its thick, long stems fountained out of the pot like narrow green ribbons cut with pinking shears. The fire hissed. The five of us sat at the table eating steaks and grits. Thick slabs of steak, with thick translucent gristle. The steaks reminded me of Dad. He said that when he died he wanted us to have a feast and eat thick juicy steaks with peppercorns, to celebrate his life. I wondered where Dad was now.

After dinner, we pushed our dishes aside and got ready to play poker. We played a few open hands to learn the rules. Julia asked a million questions about the rules. She always asked a million questions, to look smart. The rules were a cinch. It was holding the face that was the difficult part, and already mine was twitching.

"Keep your face straight, stupid," Julia said. She was wearing her ballet outfit. She sat to the left of Anton, flirting with him, and he kept fingering the fabric of her tutu, telling her how pretty it was. Mom liked us to flirt with him.

"Fuck off," I said. I wished I were wearing a tutu, instead of my velvet dress.

"Kate!" Mom said. But the tone of her voice was light, and I could tell she didn't care. She had changed lately, and didn't care if we licked our fingers or put our elbows on the table. "Elbows off the table, Mabel," she used to say. But I knew she wouldn't be caught dead saying something as stupid as that now.

Jane had her stubborn mouth on. She didn't like to flirt. Julia said Jane didn't know how.

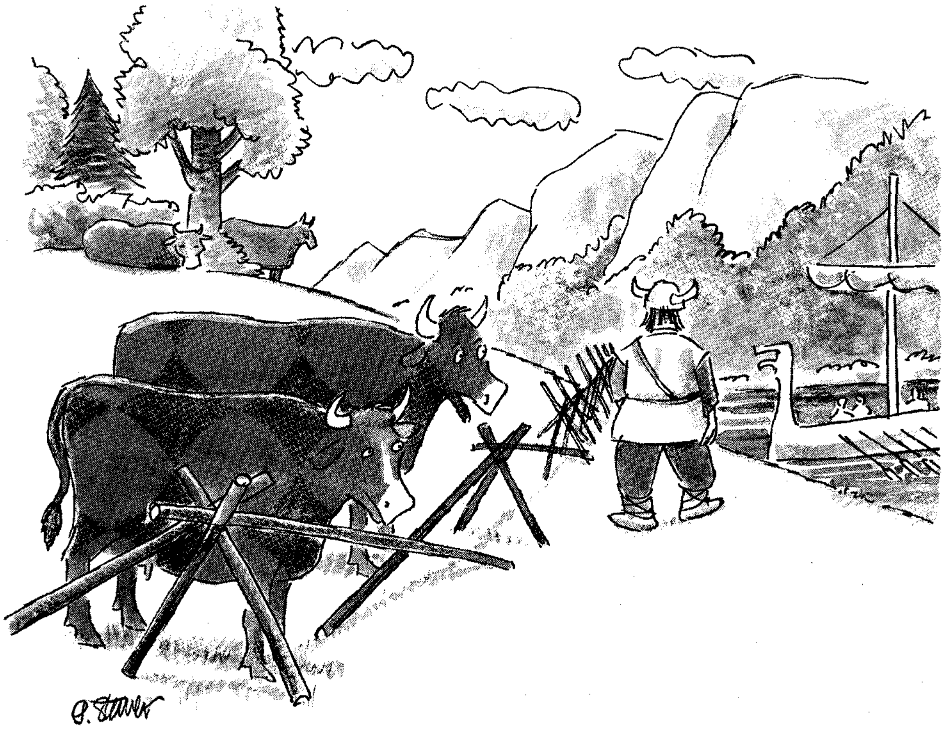
"Don't mind Jane," Mom said to Anton, smiling. "She's just shy."

"If you have a good face you can bluff, and bluffing's a lot of fun," Anton said. "There's a lot to it, but it's really quite simple. A matter of simple psychology."

He asked us if we'd brought our money. My face dropped. He winked and smiled and then Mom smiled and knit us together with her eyes. Anton pulled out his wallet and gave us each a twenty-dollar bill, which relieved me. The money was new and clean and I clutched my bill in my hand. Dad never gave us money like that, just handing it out as if it were nothing. Mom had always told us that Dad was cheap.

We exchanged our twenties for piles of different-colored chips. Each chip was glossy on one side, and the other side was as soft as a rabbit's foot. We stacked the chips in towers in front of us. Turrets of gold. The loose twenties lay in a glorious heap next to the carrousel of chips that Anton had brought. I was going to win it all. Of the three of us, I was the generous one. Jane didn't care about money, and Julia kept close hold of hers. The one time she had loaned me money, she charged me interest. Now she peered over her chips at me and flexed her left eyebrow. I'm going to win it all, I thought again.

Anton turned the lights off, and the kitchen went velvety dark, leaving only the two lit candles in the middle of the table. Everything familiar vanished for an instant, and reappeared in the murky gray shadows of candlelight. The room became a poker room, a casino. I imagined Las Vegas and the Islands, and the real-estate pirates sitting around a smoke-shrouded table with their whis-



"There goes one strange cow."

keys, and their thousand-dollar chips clinking together. The candle flames moved and twisted, although the air was still. Their small flames reflected here and there in the windows. Wineglasses on a shelf glittered neon with the colors of prisms. I thought about the thirty thousand a year Anton earned playing cards, and what it could do for us. No more creamed chipped beef, I thought.

After three closed hands we were hooked. The thing about gambling, it turned out, was that I was good at it. I had a knack for it. All you had to do was bluff and keep your face straight. Even Jane was hooked. She tried not to show it, with her serious face, but she was concentrating on Anton's words just as carefully as the rest of us. A giddiness rushed through us as our turrets diminished and grew. Even Mom had changed, although she had said, "I don't want to play. You play for me." Her green eyes glittered, flirting with ours. She had the magical radiance that winning or almost winning brings. We would do anything for her now.

Raise by raise, the pots grew. We were all bluffing like crazy. Lying freely and honestly did something for us, as if we had something on one another. I won two hands with pairs—sixes and then eights. Suckers, I wanted to say, but instead I held my face straight. I used my arms as a scoop to sweep in the chips. The next hand, I had a pair of fives. I bluffed fiendishly, with my knack. I had an inscrutable face. I bet a quarter. Anton raised. I raised again. Everyone folded. I could feel the blood in my veins.

"Let's see," Julia said, reaching for my cards.

"No, no," Anton said, stopping her. "She doesn't have to show." I could tell that Julia was irritated. She would try to get it out of me later. That was the best part—you could bluff and get away with it, and no one would know. With gambling there was always something more, something better just within your grasp, in that next hand, which made even losing enjoyable.

"But you can't bluff all the time, babe," Anton said, winning a hand with three fours after I had tried another bluff. He gave me a stern, instructive look and gathered the chips. "That sets a pattern, too, and you don't want to be read."

After that hand, he won several in a row. Our towers shrank. He left his chips in a messy pile. Mom smiled. She was tipsy. When she had a few glasses of wine, the world would seem utterly perfect to her. Dad used to tease her for getting tipsy on one glass of wine. I tried to remember how he'd tease, but couldn't.

"You see now, babes, a lot of subtlety goes into the game," Anton said. His eyes sparkled and the candlelight caught a gold filling in his mouth. A wonderful seriousness spread over his face. He wanted us to learn to be tough and to trust. "Once you learn to bluff, you need to learn how to read bluffs," he said. "You can win regularly if you know how to spot nervous tics." He pulled a silver cigarette case from his breast pocket and took out a skimpy cigarette that looked almost like a match. "Say you see a player turn his ring while betting high, you wouldn't be a fool if you challenged him." He touched his ring, a turquoise so large that it looked dangerous.

"So, likewise, the other players will be looking for your tics. It's the tics that'll give you away." He paused again and studied us. His big round head seemed suspended on his neck like a globe. I loved him. "A friend of mine in Texas, Bobby O'Donnell, had an ear tic that gave him away every time. It was involuntary but he insisted on a good game of cards."

Anton's voice became particularly thick and cottony as he remembered Texas—with long, powerful, drawn-out vowels. He half-smiled. I looked at the heap of money. I was impatient to win the game. "Lost his entire ranch, two thousand acres, in one poker game. Lost every last acre and also the house, down to the bearskin rug. Bobby was a terrible card player. There's another lesson here. Always remember, never start off with more money than your opponents when playing high-stakes poker." He shook his head in disapproval.

"Eve," he said to my mother, "if you were playing, your tic would be your thumbnail against your lip."

Mom smiled and reached for his cigarette and took the tiniest puff.

"And Julia." Anton looked at her. "You twist your hair." She was twirling a curl into a sausage. She quit and sat on her hands. I stopped, too; I was picking at my knuckles.

"Kate, you fiddle with your fingers." He grinned at me and squinted. I hadn't realized we had all these tics.

"And Jane." They stared at each other for a long time and I thought that at any minute Jane would break into a smile. Then her face changed and became serious. God, I hoped she wouldn't get difficult. A smile waited in Anton's eyes as they continued to stare. "Jane," he said, "you touch your ear." Jane kept staring, until at last he looked away. I thought about the four of us with our tics, all ticking around the table. Mom's thumb rubbed her lip and Julia twirled her hair. I started to laugh.

"It's not funny, it's sad," Jane said. She looked down at the table, staring at our littered dishes and dried-up bits of steak and fat. "I don't like this." She got up and excused herself from the game, shoving her chips back in the carrousel without asking for any money for them.

"Babe, don't get discouraged," Anton said gently, dealing the rest of us another hand of draw. "You're doing fine. You're a good player." Tender like a father.

"It's a school night," Jane murmured. "I have homework to do."

"You should pay attention to him," Mom said smiling. She sipped her wine. "He makes a living at this." Jane ignored her and began to clear the table loudly.

"Just let her quit," I said. She loved to make a scene. She liked it when we begged her to do stuff. I bet she wanted Anton to beg her.

"Don't mind Jane," Julia said. "She's just anti-social."

Jane turned on a lamp and then sat down by the fire to read. We ignored her.

THE poker game went on. I was almost feeling pretty playing cards. My velvet dress felt good. I thought I'd wear this dress to school when I got some of my friends to play. I'd take the rich ones down by the brook behind the school. I could almost hear the water in the creek rippling. The sky would be blue with a few lazy clouds. Billy Keaton came to mind, with his eggplant head and the wad of cash he carried around in the front pocket of his jeans. He loved to show it off, fanning it between his fingers, flapping it against his palm. I was going to win that wad. My temples ached, just thinking about it.

Julia dealt a hand of Anaconda and I got a pair of tens. She bet, and I raised her. My first card was another ten, and a chill shot through me. It was a big pot. I studied Anton. His face was as straight as a quill. Julia's left eyebrow rose. I decided she must be bluffing. The next two cards to me were a one-eyed jack

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and the suicide king. They looked glorious together—three tens, king high.

"I raise seventy-five cents," I said, and slid three red chips into the pot, letting them clink against the other chips. I loved that sound. I rubbed my knuckles and then quickly stopped, hoping nobody had seen me. Julia raised. I raised again.

Jane came to the table, looming over it. "It's eleven o'clock," she said. The candlelight lit her face, making it spooky and beautiful. Her big eyes beamed. "It's time for bed."

"Bug off," Julia said, and we began our showdown, rolling our cards over one at a time and betting with each roll.

"Let them finish the hand," Mom murmured to Jane, watching the game. I hated it when the two of them started acting like moms together. Jane cleared the rest of the plates, clattering dishes on top of each other. She loaded the dishwasher. My three tens lay on the table beautifully with the jack and the king. "Three tens, king high," I announced and turned to Anton, smiling.

"I have a full house. I won," Julia said, turning over her last card. She had three twos and two threes. It's not fair, I thought—Julia's the cheap one, *she* can't win. Quickly, she swept the chips onto her pile.

"Time for bed," Jane said again. She flicked on the overhead lights. My eyes stung from the brightness. The room became just a kitchen again, with only a few partly filled wineglasses left on the table.

"Good job, babe," Anton said to Julia.

My face dropped, as all the possibility inside me vanished. I had only a handful of chips left. I felt ugly. I concentrated hard. Then I filled again, thinking I'd take Jane's chips; nobody was using them. Then I decided no, I'd take a loan from Anton. That would be fair. I'd win it back. I'd win the next hand—I could feel it.

"Anton," I asked, "could you loan me ten dollars of chips?" I held him with my eyes. Mom laughed.

"Come on, Kate," Jane said. I hated her. "I don't think it's right for Kate to be gambling," she said to Mom. "It makes her greedy."

"Bitch," I said. I could tell she wanted a fight. "Can I borrow ten dollars?" I asked again.

"You lost, Kate," Jane said. "Game's over. Time for bed." Her hands rested on her hips. Her hair was loose and wild from the braids that had been there. Her face was pale in the bright light.

"Good night, sweeties," Mom said to us. She gave me a look that told me to go with Julia and Jane.

I said I wanted to play another game. Anton put down the cards and counted out Julia's chips. I hated Julia.

"We'll play another game tomorrow night," Mom said. Her expression was pleasant. She was happy that we wanted to play.

"It's not fair," I said.

"Don't be a poor loser," Julia said.

"You're coming, too, Mom. It's late," Jane said.

"I'll be up in a bit. Now do as I say."

"You promised you'd read to Kate, and, besides, it's already late." Jane turned on the dishwasher. There was something wrong with it that made it run loudly, chugging and coughing. We were all fighting; we all hated each other.

"Anton," Jane said. "I think it would be better if you went home now."

"What's the big deal?" Julia said to Jane. "You know Anton spends the night." I thought of Anton's Cadillac hidden down the overgrown lane.

"They sleep together," I announced. "You know that." I liked saying "sleep together" instead of "fuck." It was more grown-up.

"Shut up," Jane said to both of us.

"Fuck off."

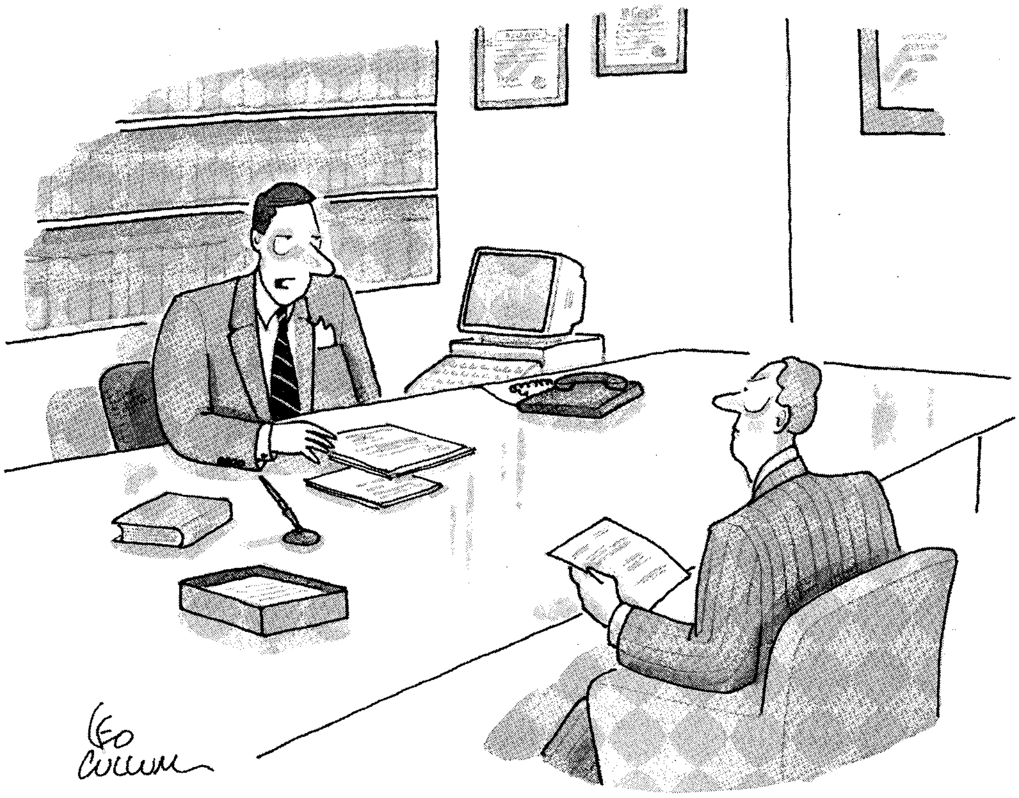
A glass slipped out of Jane's hand and shattered. Silence. I could still hear the sounds of glass flying everywhere.

"Enough," Mom said. Long and slow. For a moment there was more silence. I was afraid to look at her.

"I have had enough of you, Jane," Mom said, speaking slowly. "You have been an embarrassment all evening." She stood up. "Why don't you tell Anton why you're being so impossible?"

Jane murmured again that it was a school night. Her voice was small.

"A school night?" Mom said, staring at Anton. Her face flushed. I felt sorry for Anton—caught up in one of our fights. I was afraid he wouldn't like us anymore. God, I wished Jane would just behave. She could drop it right now and it would be fine.



"I'm certain I speak for the entire legal profession when I say that the fee is reasonable and just."

"Jane," I said, but Mom didn't let me speak.

"You see, Jane doesn't want me to have a life," she said.

"Eve," Anton said gently. "Jane hasn't been difficult. Don't antagonize her."

But Mom pressed on. "She's been difficult, all right. I want you to hear what she has to say. She thinks she's so smart, understanding everything."

"Come off it, Mom," Julia said, wetting her fingertips and putting out the candles. I thought she looked stupid, leaning over in her ballet outfit. I bet the only thing on her mind was cashing in the chips. Greedy pig, I thought.

"Don't tell me to come off it," Mom snapped.

"*Mo-m*," Jane said, drawing out the word.

Mom grabbed Jane's arm and yanked her. I knew what that felt like.

"Jane's afraid of you, Anton," Mom said. "Why don't you tell him, Jane?"

Mom kept repeating her name. You always knew you were in big trouble when she kept repeating your name. It was eerie the way she did that—as if the name became something she possessed, that didn't belong to you. I was glad she wasn't mad at me. For the most part I tried hard to stay out of trouble.

Mom yanked Jane forward. Jane looked like a little girl, suddenly. Younger than me. Her shoulders slouched forward as if she were carrying something, and suddenly I felt tremendously sad.

"Tell him you think he'll never leave his wife, Jane," Mom said. She pushed Jane toward Anton while still holding on to her arm. "You see, Jane thinks she's so smart. She tells me you're never going to . . ."

"Mom, shut up," Jane said, shaking herself free.

"Eve," Anton said again. For a moment there was quiet. I could hear Jane breathing. I thought about the nun and looked at Anton. Just looking at him made me feel awful. His eyes were big and afraid and he was alone standing there. His face didn't seem so lively anymore. He fingered his ring.

"We can talk about this all together, babe," Anton said softly to Jane. "These are big questions and it's late now, but we need to talk about these things, babe. It's right for us to talk about this."

Anton looked at Julia and me. His eyes were deep and sad. I thought about his children. I imagined he missed them. I thought about Dad and the day he left and felt a knot in my throat, wondering what it was like for Dad when he chose to leave. I thought about the nun and remembered how she had called sometimes, the international beeps giving her away. The three of us would press our heads in to the receiver, hoping for something that would explain what was happening, give us a clue about what was coming next. We'd listen until she hung up.

"We'll have to have another poker game again soon," Anton said, finishing off his wine. He placed a kiss on the top of my head and his fingers rubbed my neck. Then he did the same to Julia and also to Jane. He hugged Mom quickly and went out. Suddenly I had the feeling that he really did need us, and that made me feel closer to Mom. I had the feeling that he needed her and that she wanted to be needed. There was still a smell of Anton in the room, a faint scent of rain and smoke. The crotch of my tights was hanging low between my thighs; I'd outgrown them.

Headlights flooded the kitchen and then faded as Anton backed his car down the driveway. Mom turned off the dishwasher, and the kitchen went silent. "Are you happy, Jane?" she said, her eyes set hard.

"You're drunk and stoned," Jane said.

"You are *wretched!*" Mom screamed in a whisper. Her face was all pink. "Why can't you be nice to my guest? Why can't you just once let me have a life? You don't know how it is. Do you have any idea what it's like with no one to help you out? How could I have such a child? Kate and Julia aren't like you."

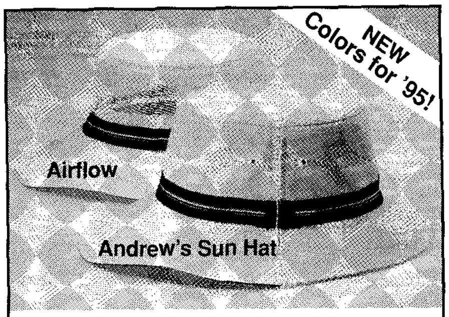
Julia and I stood still.

"Your guest is a creep," Jane said quietly but vehemently. "A married creep."

The hand of Anaconda was a mess on the table, with the chips. The money still lay in its glorious heap. I wondered if Julia would get all that money, or if Mom would keep it.

"Get out of my sight," Mom said.

"What are you going to do, hit me?" And Jane darted from the room, slamming the kitchen door behind her. A ruler and a flyswatter hanging on the back of the door clapped to the floor. I could feel the slam of the door in my ears. I was sorry for Jane and sorry for Mom. Now I'd have to take sides. ◆



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BOOKS

DEAR DARLING COSMOS

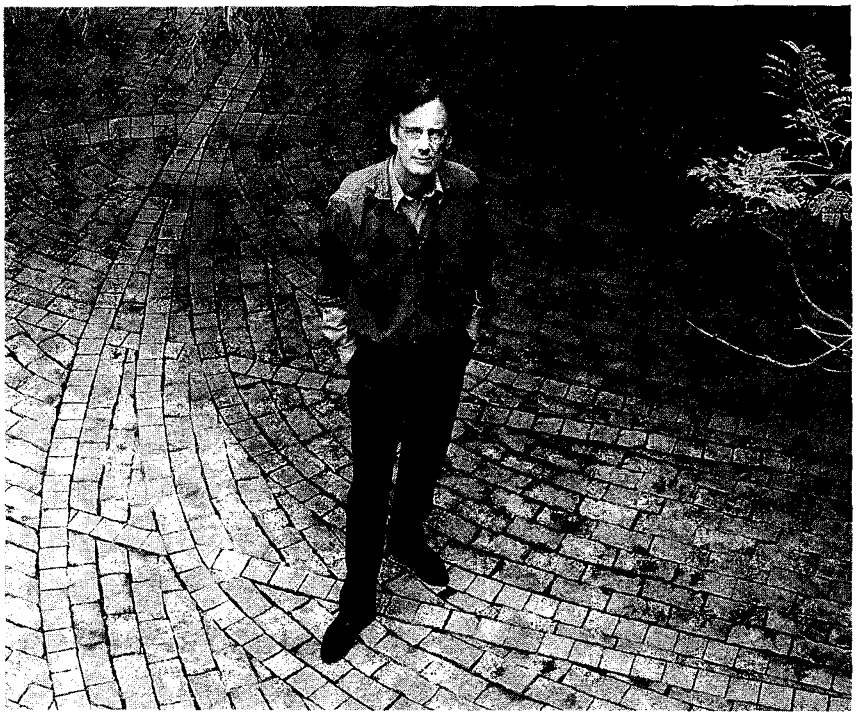
An architectural theorist sees stars.

BY BRENDAN GILL

THE architectural historian Charles Jencks is a most suggestible romantic unconvincingly disguised as a student of things as they really are. His writings over the years reveal him to be an intellectual genially adept at sensing just what ideas are—or are about to be—in vogue. Having written four small books on the rise of the postmodern movement, Jencks, in a fifth book devoted to the subject—"Post-Modernism: The New Classicism in Art and Architecture," which was published in 1987—apologized for his "promiscuous fecundity." He is active on both sides of the Atlantic as a lecturer, a writer, and a designer, and his promiscuity and fecundity continue to distinguish his labors—and perhaps are on the increase. As for the ideas that he falls so passionately in love with, he might protest that they are not merely the latest to arrive on the scene but also the most valid in their essence, and that fashion has nothing to do with his exuberant embrace of them. In any event, being in fashion isn't necessarily more harmful to a writer than being out of fashion is good for him. I see Jencks as a Shelley who has survived into middle age, undiminished in his evangelical desire to explain the nature of the world to a world perversely reluctant to pay serious attention to itself.

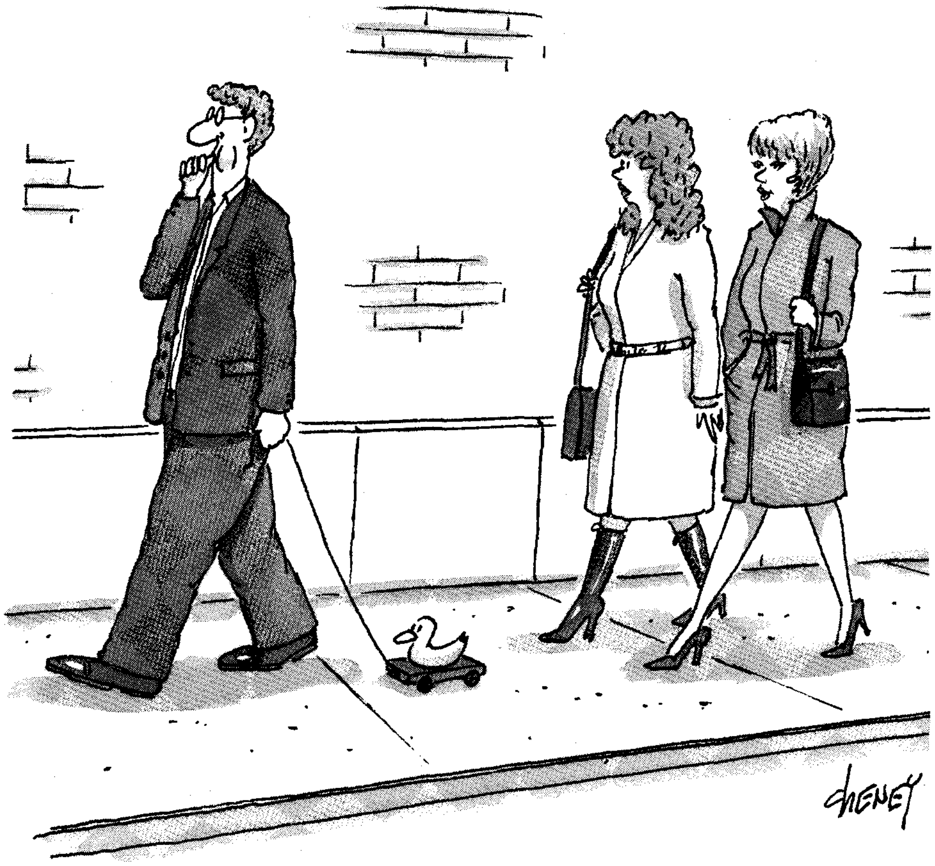
Not much to my surprise, the world possesses for the energetic Jencks a defect graver than inattentiveness: it is too small. Evangelists are a restless lot, eager to extend their range without awaiting an accumulation of local conversions, and Jencks is no exception. He has moved beyond the narrow boundaries of our planet in his latest book, which he describes as a "friendly polemic" but which is in fact a mash note to the cosmos. It is called "The Architecture of the Jumping Universe" (Academy Editions; $20)—a title intensely Jencksian, calculated to attract and irritate his more conventional readers. Is he, we wonder, using "architecture" to mean, in the usual way, the design of structures that serve to shelter humankind, or does he intend it to denote the suppositional structure of the universe? Are we talking floor plans and two-by-fours or galaxies and black holes? For that matter, why does Jencks use the word "jumping," since he intends this adjective to refer to quanta, which are more commonly said simply to be discontinuous? A jumping universe has the ring of being both overexcited and somewhat raffish; one thinks of a clown mounting a plank (I had almost written "Planck") to entertain an audience not ordinarily given to thinking hard about anything. "All this is going to be great fun," the author seems to be assuring us in his opening pages, and he is right: the book *is* great fun, but not so much because of Jencks's wit, which is often seductively manifest in snappy one-liners, as because of the degree to which his affair with a non-Newtonian, non-mechanistic universe has caused him, like any lovesick swain, to babble amorous incoherences.

In the days when our globe, though tiny in size and occupying a humiliatingly obscure place in the Milky Way, was Jencks's chief concern, he was quick to observe and set down the aesthetic intentions he discerned behind the changes in architectural practice which occurred in the years when postmodernism was emerging from the presumed wreckage of modernism. Eventually, he was able to draw up formidably complex charts that assigned to our best-known architects—Venturi, Rossi, Bofill, Johnson, Graves, and the like—appropriate pigeonholes in the period between 1960 and 1985. Imitating the precision with which Polonius categorizes plays as historical-pastoral, tragical-historical, or tragical-comical-historical-pastoral, Jencks established, in his 1987 book, what he called "the four traditions of Post-Modern classical architecture: Fundamentalist Classicism, Revivalist Classicism, Urbanist Classicism, and Eclectic Classicism." Whether they were aware of it or not, all postmodernist architects belonged to one or another of these species of classicists, and the differences among them were



Where should our builders find inspiration? Charles Jencks suggests outer space.

DAVID MICHALEK, COURTESY OF ACADEMY EDITIONS



"He has a few things to work through, but we're good together."

• •

often less important than the likenesses.

At that point in his career, Jencks's scholarship reflected an effort to establish connections between the architecture being practiced in our contemporary culture and that which had been practiced in a number of past cultures. The prefix "post" in "postmodern" wasn't intended to imply our being at the end of something and therefore at the beginning of something else; rather, it was meant to imply our being subsequent to many earlier periods and a continuation of them. How fortunate, for example, to be able to claim a link with the Renaissance, which means literally to be "born again" and permits us to enjoy, in a nonreligious sense, the assurance of a connection with a remote but still instructive past as we set about addressing the future!

Yesterday's Jencks was content to preach the E. M. Forster doctrine of "Only connect" as it applied to human beings and their handiwork over no telling how many millennia, and our expectation in picking up "Jumping Universe" is that he will proceed in this direction. But no. Now that he has become infatuated with outer space, certain awkwardnesses occur. The means by which connections can be forged between a measurable speck of dust and an unmeasured immensity is hard for us untutored earthlings to imagine; moreover, Jencks's credentials as a teacher are compromised by our temptation, however unjustly it has been aroused, to laugh at him. There is always an element of the comical (Polonius might say, rather, of the tragical-comical) in other people's infatuations; we find it amusing that one of Jencks's ways of getting us on closer terms with the universe is to anthropomorphize it. One could argue that his crush on the universe is so great that he cannot resist granting it, among other unlooked-for gifts, the gift of gender. The object of his devotion isn't "it" but "she," a winsome superorganism with a will of her own, in which a knack for self-organization appears to imply as well a knack for self-improvement. It is far from clear to me why a universe should not alter over the course of time without being thought to be seeking to improve itself. Especially puzzling is the unspoken assumption that the nature of this "improvement" can be detected by human beings, who have yet to agree on what constitutes improvement in themselves, much less in a universe that has been evolving (by Jencks's count and in Jencks's terminology) jump by jump over billions of years.

No problem there, says Jencks. Everything is explained by the cosmogenic world view, which he defines as "the idea that the universe is a single, unfolding self-organizing event, something more like an animal than machine, something radically interconnected and creative; an entity that jumps suddenly to higher levels of organization and delights us as it does so. Complexity Theory, the Gaia hypothesis, Chaos and Quantum theories all point in this direction. We know truths that have been revealed to no other generation, and they can give us great hope and strength." Warming to the task, Jencks scourges his old-fogy adversaries:

> Fundamentally, the new understanding of reality overturns the four great enslaving "isms" of Modernity: determinism, mechanism, reductivism, and materialism. The new concepts which have replaced them are emergence, self-organization, evolution by punctuated equilibria, and cosmogenesis—creativity as basic in the universe.
>
> They refute the nihilistic view, developed because of Modern determinism and materialism, that our place in the universe is accidental, tangential, absurd, and discontinuous with the rest of nature. . . . Mind, consciousness, and sentient creatures with intelligence are not alien to but *central* to the cosmogenic process.

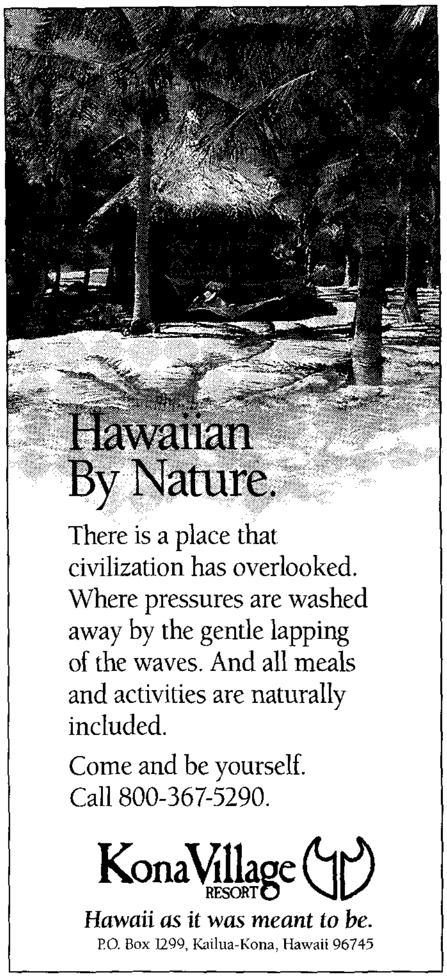
How is one to deal with so vehement a lover's declaration of war? What does Jencks imagine he has succeeded in conveying to his readers when he employs the words "know" and "truths" as if they required no qualifying? What is his "know" compared to mine—his "truth" to my "truth"? As an old-fashioned enslaved nihilist, I might believe and assert that the universe is accidental, tangential, and absurd, but I would certainly never claim that I *knew* this, or that it was a truth. Similarly, how does Jencks intend us to distinguish what he calls "mind" from what he calls "consciousness"? And when he says of the story of cosmogenesis that it is a common narrative with "spiritual implications," we await in vain a definition of "spiritual."

The fervent swain hastens to confess that translating the story of cosmogenesis into architecture "presents some difficulties." Luckily, he has found a way of brushing them aside. "Perhaps in certain cases," he writes, "we need beauty to make the universe itself choose one route rather than another; certainly aesthetics plays a big role in the way scientists choose between competing hypotheses." Old-fogy-like questions arise. Who is it that feels this "need," what does the need consist of, how does Jencks define his notion of beauty, and by what means do we go about "making" the universe "choose" one route instead of another? To my mind, all this is fustian; with mounting bewilderment, I seek to call up those scientists for whom aesthetics has played a big role in their choice of hypotheses. Hesitantly, I might suggest Freud, but it has been a long time now since anyone called him a scientist, and it is his aesthetics—his dependence upon ancient classic literary metaphors—that has helped to render his work suspect.

ONCE Jencks has established to his satisfaction that all nature is, as he puts it, "ensouled," he is ready to address the announced subject matter of his book: the architecture of the jumping universe as it is—or ought to be—practiced here on earth. Rockets and satellites aside, the architecture of outer space remains, as far as we can tell, undesigned and unbuilt. All the more reason, then, in Jencks's view, for contemporary architects to follow the new aesthetic principles laid down by that pretty creature Cosmogenesis. If she holds that the universe is not mechanistically determined, it follows that architecture should take care to eschew determinism, embracing neither the postmodernism of a scant generation ago, with its taint of sentimentality in regard to the past, nor the deconstructivist collisional design precepts currently popular in architecture schools. Members of the profession should adopt instead an "aesthetic of life," which consists "of undulating movement, of surprising humour, of catastrophic folds and delightful waves, of billowing crystals and fractured planes, of layered glass and spiralling growth." Irresistible, the temptation to lure the author back to earth as, Shelley-like, he skylarks upward: if it is difficult to imagine a house built of crystals that billow, still more difficult is it to imagine a house built of surprising humor. What would keep the wind and the rain out of such a house? Or is it then, at the height of a severe storm, that the humor of his total lack of shelter takes the drenched client by surprise?

Jencks urges architects to favor his "aesthetic of life" because, in something like the fashion of an Elizabethan country masque, "quantum physics is behind it, pushing, while the continuously unfolding cosmos is ahead, luring one on; not designing like an architect, but gestating and giving birth, like a fecund animal." One example of such an architect is Arata Isozaki, who, however, exhibits the defect of practicing a "static" cosmic architecture, which produces a "wry monumentalism" instead of Jencks's preferred galactic folds and waves. Jencks has greater praise for Charles Correa's recent work in India, which incorporates "such things as . . . the plenum vacuum (the mystery at the heart of things; how something comes from 'nothing')." He notes of Correa's Inter-University Center for Astronomy and Astrophysics, in Poona, that its plan "reveals the fractal pattern known as Sierpiński's Gasket in one courtyard, the figure eight and infinity . . . in another, and a Black Hole in the center courtyard with energy being ejected on the diagonal." There is, to be sure, a clumsiness in respect to embodying the latest mathematical concepts in an actual structure of stone and wood, to say nothing of making that structure at least moderately habitable. A casual visitor to the Inter-University Center would be unaware that he was traversing Sierpiński's Gasket, even if he happened to know that such a thing existed. As Jencks admits, "many of the most important insights in current science are invisible," and he goes on, "They are more easily represented by equations, words, and waving arms, than by big heavy things that sit on the ground getting wet!"

At the moment, Peter Eisenman occupies a prominent niche in the Jencks pantheon. Eisenman designs buildings in the shape of waves, and especially of solitary waves, called solitons. Jencks is enchanted with Eisenman's design for a house in Düsseldorf, which consists of "two solitons [twisting] around a pick-axe shape, which is actually a fold." He explains, "These are symbolically generated by forces on the site: row houses and harbour waves, which are amplified by a vortex motion. The two solitons then twist through each other, one on the outside, one on the inside. . . . The combination of two movement systems played in counterpoint would really give the building a sense of energy, as if the two solitons were two earthquakes pushing through each other while trying to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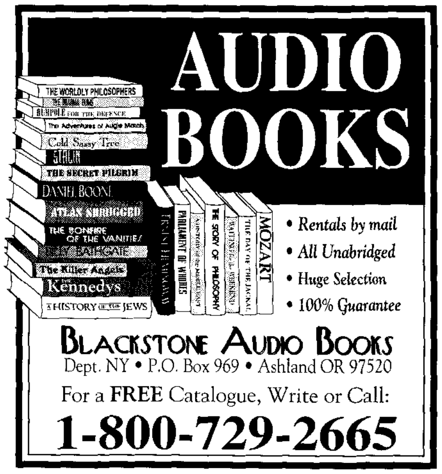
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break out." The house sounds far from cozy and remains unbuilt; as a person wary of earthquakes and solitons, I am inclined to remark, "No wonder."

WHAT is the message of "The Architecture of the Jumping Universe"? I would say it is "Press on!"—the favorite exhortation of an Earth Mother of a somewhat earlier day, Tallulah Bankhead. The universe loves us and is eager to have us love her back, and it may be that she loves architects most of all, but it will be necessary for them to find their individual, up-to-the-minute ways of accommodating her. It may also be that, pressing on, they will receive occasional assistance from engineers in the aerospace industry, but they can no longer look to the past, whose architects, however talented, were misled by the now discredited—the now truly laughable—Newtonian hypothesis. The tranquillity of a Palladian façade reflects the tranquillity of a clockwork universe; too bad for Palladio. To be either modern or postmodern is beside the point: better a black hole than a pigeonhole. Jencks quotes Mies in old age as grumbling, "One cannot have a new architecture every Monday morning." Nevertheless, it may be that architects should act as if just such an exhausting feat were possible. To that end, Jencks urges them to espouse the Cosmic Code. He writes, "To get beyond the provincial concerns of the moment . . . to regain a power that all great architecture has had, it must look to the transcendent laws which science reveals. The shared content of architecture lies primarily in these laws. . . . However, right content, like right-thinking, is not enough. A cosmogenic architecture must embody imagination in action, it must dramatize creative processes, or it is nothing."

These abstract exclamatory flourishes are all very well for a sermon, but they make a lame ending to a mash note. Still, what else could we have expected? It is a common fate of lovers, pen in hand, to run out of things to say before they run out of the desire to say them. ♦

SCOTS ADRIFT

A woman's kind of high-seas adventure.

BY SUSANNAH CLAPP

CANDIA McWILLIAM is known for the hugeness of her vocabulary and the richness of her metaphors. She is in her fortieth year and has written three books: the first was violent, the second was sinister, and the third, "Debatable Land" (Doubleday; $23.50), is warmly and soberly reflective. All display a style that is startling and disturbing. It is a style that has won its author prizes and some critical reproof. It is the style of her speech and, to a surprising extent, of her person.

Candia McWilliam

TOM CURRY

"I am taller than most and have more hair. I also look at other people very hard." This is the voice of the woman who narrates McWilliam's second novel, "A Little Stranger," but it could be a portrait of the artist. It is a habit of this author's to suggest herself in her characters: long-limbed heroines; women with Scottish backgrounds; a wife having an uneasy time on a grand estate. It is also her habit to suggest her speaking manner in her prose. McWilliam has characterized her delivery as having "a radio-drama quality of over-emphasis." It is precise, memorable, particular; punctuated by an unusually large number of pauses and stresses, and by an unusually high count of unexpected turns. She is a woman who has expressed her admiration of an acquaintance's frock by explaining, "I have been admiring your—garb," and who on hearing of an improbable Christian conversion has inquired with quizzical exactness, "Is that—God as we know him?"

McWilliam, who is a partygoer, a wife, and a mother, has been attached to more than one family as a child and as an adult, and is known by more than one name: to some of her old friends she is "Claude." When she wrote autobiographically about her Edinburgh childhood, she called her essay "The Many Colours of Blood." In it she told of an actress grandmother, of an anarchic father whose profession and passion it was to inspect ancient buildings in Scotland, and of abrupt, sanguinary encounters with strangers. She also gave an account of an unwary, lonely, and precarious mother, who bought dresses from the Scottish Ladies' Benevolent Frock Exchange, scooped up injured creatures, and took to collecting her daughter from school in wigs that "were not intended to imitate reality." In describing her mother, McWilliam touches on one of the perceptions that light up her novels—that there is a thin line between what is glamorous and what is preposterous. "Her desire to conform to an idea of wifehood," she writes, "led her into impersonations best not undertaken by an intelligent blonde of six foot two; she did not convince at coffee mornings." In describing Edinburgh, the city in which McWilliam was born, she anticipates the subject of her latest book.

"Debatable Land," which chronicles the voyage of six men and women crewing a British yacht in the Pacific, is McWilliam's tribute to a fellow-Scot, Robert Louis Stevenson—who himself sailed off to the South Seas. It is a hymn to the North from someone who is elsewhere. The borderlands between England and Scotland were once referred to as "debatable," and Scotland itself is a subject of debate for two unsettled Scottish shipmates, in each of whom a national and a personal identity are intricately entangled. Each compulsively visualizes, and occasionally speaks of, scenes from a long-ago life on shore. Elspeth, the skipper's wife, who sounds entirely English while being entirely Scots, is uncertain of her future with her unbending husband, a man "burdened by his sense of fiscal importance." Worried and emollient, she looks back on a childhood with parents committed to rescuing ancient Scottish buildings from ruin and to retrieving an unforgiving version of their national history. Alec, a painter in flight from domestic complications and fearful of his own temperamental coolness, broods on his obsession with the wynds and crescents of old Edinburgh, and the devotion in which he has embalmed the memory of his mother. These characters may constitute something of a homage to the author's parents—"Debatable Land" is dedicated to McWilliam's father. They also discuss, with a directness unusual in her work, questions about exploitation, colonization, and change—questions that are examined more obliquely elsewhere in the novel.

McWilliam has said that she intended this to be "an adventure story in a sort of non-testosterone-saturated style." She does employ some of the elements of the conventional sea story, producing a tremendous storm and effectively summoning the technicalities of spinnakers and cleats and mainsails. But she is more persuasive when she is adapting these conventions. She details the domestic arrangements of life afloat—the scrubbings and peelings and boilings—and glances skeptically at the mighty helmsman who has roared at the raging sea, "and admired it, and asked it to admire him." And, through a dazzling sequence of images to do with snails and their shells, she delicately explores questions of homelessness, invasion, and usurpation. The poles of this writer's nature—the pedant and the dandy—are brought into play here.

But none of the events that occur on board are as vivid as her characters' meditations, the scenes they recall from the past. What McWilliam makes of this past is wonderful. A passage early in the book shows her in full imaginative flight. One of her Scots is remembering the work his mother did at a fish-processing works:

> The cats sometimes had their kits among the salt sacks behind the sheds. The babies could not keep out the salt, being born bare and blind. So there were preserved litters, pink and rigid, among the straining jute sacks. If you pulled the salted kittens away from the fat woven sacks, they were printed with the coarse weave and flaked in their folds with crystal salt. You could see everything that was to make this small thing a cat hardly begun but present, flaps of ear, tricorne nose, distinct pads like white raspberries. It was all there but the late flattering luxury of fur and whiskers.

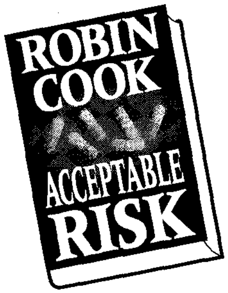
McWilliam is often like this: brilliant and pungent and eerie. Her pages spill over with surprising images—lairds have "knees like faces," a man administers a kiss to his girlfriend "as though he was injecting her with his face"—and at her best she uses them to push her narrative forward. The pickled felines are not a decorative flourish: they are to the point of a book that, drenched in the salt of the sea, is concerned with preserving the past of countries and of people.

Each of McWilliam's gifts, which are differently distributed in her novels, has its price. In "Debatable Land" her image-making sometimes impedes her story. In her second novel her ironic edge can make her appear to condescend—as when a group of workers' wives are condemned for wearing cardigans. Her first book, "A Case of Knives," came under attack in Britain for its use of fancy formulations and arcane words. The prose of that novel does contain one curlicue too many, but the excess isn't enough to damage a chilling and impressive piece of work. A book by a self-critical author, it contains its own commentary: one of its narrators is a woman whose speech is distinguished by a vast lexicon and a labyrinthine qualifying.

McWilliam has brought her needling intelligence and her complicated inflections to the prose of her novels and essays: they carry a strong color of Scots speech. And in doing so she has developed an entirely distinctive style, remarkable for the freshness of its imagery and for an elaborate, cantilevered syntax marked by uncommon inversions. It is the ideal vehicle for this cunning investigation into the pleats and twists of human memory. ♦

LOS ANGELES—A mountain lion suspected of killing at least two suburban dogs was shot to death after a state warden spotted it taking a report near the scene of the latest attack.—*San Bernardino Sun.*

The report probably would have just gathered dust on some shelf anyway.



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RECOMMENDED READING

Reef

by Romesh Gunesekera
(New Press; $20)

This first novel, set in Sri Lanka, is a subtle tale of devotion and longing. When eleven-year-old Triton becomes a houseboy for an aristocratic and benevolent marine biologist—"my Mister Salgado"—he dedicates himself to his new life with the zeal of a novitiate. The years pass. Mr. Salgado putters in his study, visits the coast to document the encroachments of the ocean, falls in love. Triton bends his desires to his work, becoming an exquisite cook and orchestrating the details of their domestic life with the skill and pride of a maestro. And all the while Sri Lanka's political unrest seethes around them, eroding the very foundations of their tiny kingdom.

Zola: A Life

by Frederick Brown
(Farrar, Straus & Giroux; $37.50)

A magnificent biography, at once definitive and fascinating. It introduces a poverty-stricken teen-aged Émile sharing romantic daydreams with his best friend, Paul Cézanne, and then follows him from Aix to Paris and from obscurity to fame. Along the way, Brown brings to life the worlds Zola knew—journalism, publishing, and the literary and artistic avant-garde. This portrait reveals a tidy, almost compulsive writer in the grip of a nearly hallucinatory vision, and a shy man who could be—as the Dreyfus case proved—audacious in his loyalties.

Tara Revisited: Women, War, & the Plantation Legend

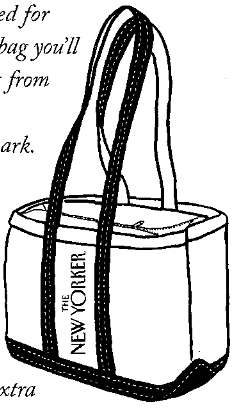
by Catherine Clinton
(Abbeville; $27.50)

A historian examines the daily life of Confederate women and finds it considerably grimmer than the version of it supplied by mythmakers nostalgic for a past that never was. Clinton's last pages offer a penetrating summary of the reasons for the myth's durable appeal.

Memoir of the Bookie's Son

by Sidney Offit
(St. Martin's; $18.95)

When the author was growing up, in Baltimore in the nineteen-thirties and forties, his father was one of the biggest bookmakers on the East Coast. In these fond reflections Offit handles with forcefulness and grace the complexities of being the son of an outlaw. His father once explained to him, "There's nothing much to it you don't already know. I take bets." But things never seemed that simple to young Sidney; he was even more confounded than most boys by the perennial question "What does your father do?"



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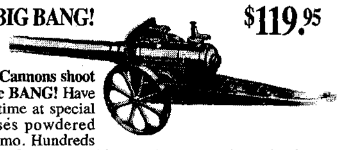

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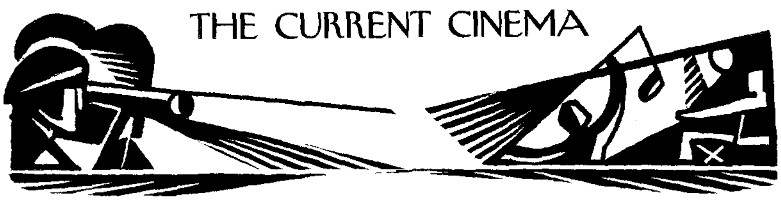


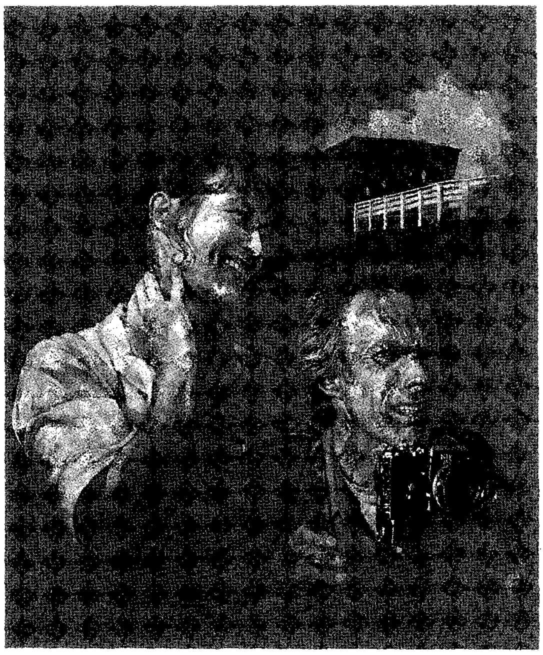
FLIRTY HARRY

A romantic best-seller is transformed in a surprising film adaptation.

BY ANTHONY LANE

When I first heard that "The Bridges of Madison County" was being turned into a movie, I was overjoyed. Here, finally, was something sure and true, a rock of reliability in an uncertain world. Whatever else happened in the pictures this year, "The Bridges of Madison County" would not let us down. It *had* to be a turkey—proud and preening, right at the center of the farmyard. Other films would sicken and stun, and divide public opinion. Not this one: it would bind our wounds, bring us together in a common act of mockery. The novel it is based on, written by Robert James Waller, was the worst book in living memory; if the movie had any integrity, any guts, it would honor that achievement. And now look what happens. The film comes out, and guess what? *It's really not bad.*

The trouble started when they gave the project to Clint Eastwood, a man whose bullshit detector has been turned up to maximum for thirty years. (He both stars and directs.) Things didn't get much better when Meryl Streep was cast opposite him: she is quoted in the publicity material as saying, "I was blind to the book's power," which may be a polite way of saying she took one sip of Waller's prose and had to call for a stomach pump. The task of turning that prose into a script—into clear English, for a start—went to Richard LaGravenese, who wrote "The Fisher King," "The Ref," and "A Little Princess." Plenty of quirkiness there, but none of the jello-headed schmalz that Waller fans would be praying for when their sacred text became a motion picture. Who could be trusted to keep the flame alive? It was easy to see how you could maintain the novel's clean, classical grasp of action—"She rose and dropped dumplings into boiling water"—but what about the potency of its hero, Robert Kincaid? "I am the highway and a peregrine and all the sails that ever went to sea," he says modestly, and how can a mere movie convey all that? There was only one flicker of hope: In the novel, Kincaid drives a truck that he calls Harry, and, what with those hours on the Iowa back roads, Harry gets dirty. Didn't the Eastwood fellow already make a film about that?



Meryl Streep and Clint Eastwood: half-forgotten voluptuousness and a seam of anger.

DAHL TAYLOR

The plot is simple enough. A nice lady named Francesca Johnson (Meryl Streep) lived in Madison County with her husband, Richard (Jim Haynie), and their two children. One fine day, she was left alone while the rest of the family went off to do something with a cow at the State Fair. They were gone four

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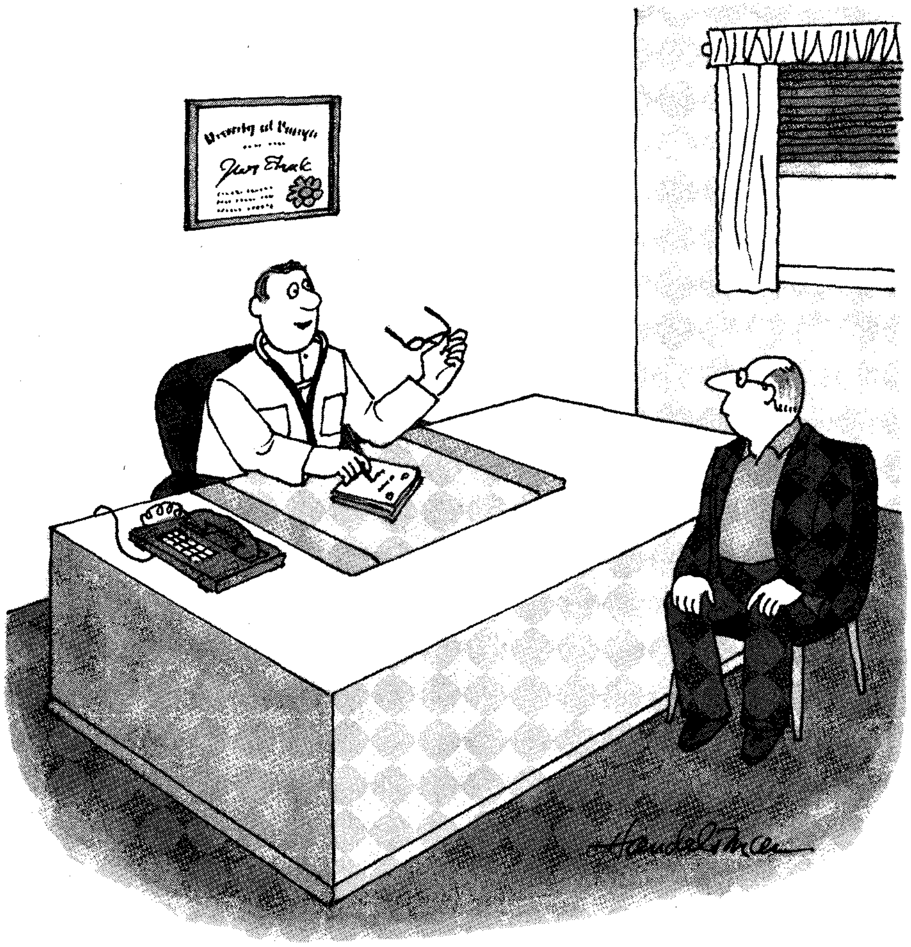

"You're in luck, in a way. Now is the time to be sick—while Medicare still has some money."

• •

whole days, but Francesca was never bored, because during that time she looked after the house, went shopping, and committed adultery. A tall man by the name of Kincaid (Clint Eastwood) dropped by to ask directions. He was a photographer, and she accompanied him when he went to shoot the famous covered bridges that so enhance this lovely corner of America. (During their visit, the weather went from gray to bright very quickly, and the continuity person was sent to bed without any supper.) Kincaid seemed nice, just like Francesca, and soon she had him scraping carrots at the sink. The next evening, they made love, and Kincaid made her see that she had been trapped in lifeless erotic stagnation—and stultifying bourgeois complacency, too! Soon the tall, nice sex machine had to be on his way, and he asked the stagnant lady to come along, but she decided to stay. Richard and the children came back with great news: their steer had won first prize. Francesca was very pleased, and lived happily in stultifying bourgeois complacency ever after.

THERE are two ways to treat this tale. Either you can puff it up into something lush and operatic, as Waller did, and run the risk of portentousness, or you can nail it down into something tight and desperate, as Eastwood does, and incur the wrath of the people who preferred the other option. The first indication that his good taste—or, at any rate, his natural leaning toward the downbeat—may see him through the nonsense comes in the opening credits. I was expecting a fat, violin-fed score to start drooling all over us, but we don't hear a note. The uneventful landscape looks more ominous than inviting, and it makes you wonder what events will unroll here. If you didn't know Waller's story, you might think that the picture was heading for "In Cold Blood" territory, on the brink of some random, rustic bloodletting.

The suspicion lingers during the early scenes in Francesca's house. The production designer, Jeannine Oppewall, has done something cunning with the place, clammed up its heart. You can sense this in the rat browns and other drab colors, and also in the looming of the walls: the rooms appear to have been constructed one size too small, so that everyone within looks pinched and squeezed. The first people we see here are Francesca's grown-up children, Carolyn (Annie Corley) and Michael (Victor Slezak), who have arrived to set matters straight after their mother's death. The central love story will evolve in flashback as they root through her letters, diaries, photographs, and other suspiciously well-organized junk. They are shocked by an old photograph of their mother in middle age; Michael's wife, looking over their shoulders, says, "She's not wearing a bra." The audience, meanwhile, is in even deeper shock; here we are, watching an adaptation of a Robert James Waller novel, and there are *jokes* in it. Carolyn's indignation slowly sharpens to a point: "Now I find out that in between bake sales my mother was Anaïs Nin."

The flashbacks present their mother as a sensitive, suffering soul—so sensitive that she is, in fact, Italian. In the novel, Francesca has "the smallest trace of an accent." Not here she doesn't. Let's face it: if Meryl Streep gets a sniff of the word "accent," she's not going to turn up her nose and walk away. She's going to take a deep breath and pounce. Welcome the winner of the Madison County Anna Magnani Imitation Contest, 1965. The impression is rounded out with an appetite for grand opera and with hefty hips and a maternal bust; contrary to the report, one thing that Francesca is definitely wearing is a bra, and there's all manner of cladding built into the superstructure. Mind you, anyone can trot off to makeup and get fleshed out; only Streep could develop the perfect walk to match her new figure—a swinging stroll that tells both of rank boredom and of half-forgotten voluptuousness. Even better is her trick of dabbing strands of hair away from the side of her face with a flick of the hand; the camera catches her doing this as she gazes away from the breakfast table, where her family is pigging out in silence. At the end of her tether, she finds grace.

I have always been scared of Meryl Streep. She's brilliant, but the shine is that of an Ice Queen. One reason it's so hard to warm to her is that she visibly refuses to stop thinking about her performances; the recent escapes into high adventure ("The River Wild") and broad comedy ("Death Becomes Her") were intended as a change of gear, but you could still see the engine whirring away in her head. The big question, in fact, is whether *life* becomes her. Middle-period De Niro made you feel the same way; observing the two of them in "Falling in Love," as they went through the precisely calibrated motions, was like watching Karpov versus Kasparov. "The Bridges of Madison County," in its early stages, looks like another showcase for Streep and her Amazing Technical Command, but something weird happens. She and Eastwood get it together; they very nearly get down. They hit a steady, smiling rhythm; the movie is dreary when it comes to the main act of sex (though not as dull as the "orgasms of the mind" invoked by Waller), but the warmup routines—the flirting, the aimless joshing around the kitchen—feel not only skilled but sincere. Big news, I guess: Clint and Meryl melt. I'm surprised the bridges didn't get washed away.

Eastwood is the last great monolith, but even monoliths should let other people chip away at them; it does not reflect well on the Eastwood image that his most popular sidekick was covered with orange hair and ate a lot of fruit. Streep is his first real equal in a long time; you have to go back to 1984, to Geneviève Bujold in "Tightrope," to track down the last strong woman in an Eastwood movie. (Maybe Wolfgang Petersen's "In the Line of Fire" loosened him up—the patter with Rene Russo, the hot line to John Malkovich.) On the other hand, there is an air of lonely sacrifice about "The Bridges of Madison County": Clint has to clench his fists and spout garbage. He can't afford to lose the entire Waller vote at the box office, and therefore, while he and his screenwriter have surgically removed most of the horrors that grew in the original text, a few have been left more or less intact. For all you Kincaid wanna-bes out there, Mr. Eastwood has kindly agreed to say a few lines.

Here are some of your favorites: "I'm a citizen of the world." "I love people. I'd like to meet 'em all." And the vastly surprising "Good stuff, Yeats." (If only he were addressing an Irish sheriff or something, but no. He really is talking about poetry.) There's a hunk of baloney devoted to Africa, all about "the cohabitation of man and beast," but worse is to come: at one point, taking Waller at his word, Clint Eastwood wears a pair of *sandals*. What ever for? You don't see the Dalai Lama packing a .44 Magnum. The footwear was a bad omen; I could feel the spirit of Waller wafting into the proceedings like tear gas, and recalled his description of Kincaid as "half-man, half-something-else creature." Look out! Suddenly, without warning, Francesca starts to deliver her own voice-overs: she lies in the bathtub, stares at the drip on the rim of the shower head, and reels off a meditation about how "intensely erotic" the guy downstairs is. I think we had already gathered that, but thanks anyway. Then there's an endless dinner scene, in which the lovers thrash out the question of whether Francesca will or, alternatively, will not leave her husband. Make up your damn minds, people. If Kincaid is such a citizen of the world, why doesn't he just stash her in the trunk of dirty Harry and take off?

It's worth sticking around for their final, speechless encounter, a wonderfully shot sequence of trucks passing in the rain. Most of "The Bridges of Madison County" has a nicely curbed poignancy; if Spielberg had taken the helm, as he once threatened to do, you would have found a box of ten-ply tissues under your seat. What you remember about the movie, looking back, has nothing to do with love. It's the seam of anger running through it, the unexpected sneer in Francesca's diatribe against Iowa: "I'm supposed to say it's quiet and people are nice." Later, when she turns on Kincaid and labels him a hypocrite and a phony, you realize what Streep and Eastwood are doing. They aren't concealing Robert James Waller, or carrying on despite him, or pretending he isn't there. They're at war with him. "The Bridges of Madison County" is a half-good, half-something-else film, but it's a bold one, because it slights what it was meant to esteem. It shrugs at that whole strain of dumb pastoral folly and at the ten million suckers who fell for it. It drops the dumpling. ♦

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CANNES EPILOGUE

BY NADINE GORDIMER

"Forrest Gump" as the culmination of a hundred years of the art of cinema: this appalling thought prompted me to accept an invitation to serve on the jury of the 1995 Cannes Film Festival. I belong to the first generation for whom film has been an art form, along with literature, music, painting, and sculpture, rather than a technical discovery, the cinematograph, made in 1895 by two French brothers, Auguste and Louis Lumière. The century has been one of so much delight and revelation in the development of this unique medium. How could we allow it to be marked by a laurel wreath of confectioners' sugar placed upon the head of the only hero an apparently weary civilization, dwindled into sentimentality, could conceive of—a hero based on the premise that you have to be brain-damaged to be fully human in this world?

So I went to Cannes hoping for a masterpiece: a film that goes for all the possibilities in multimedia filmmaking; a film that extends boundaries already attained by the great makers, from Chaplin and Welles through Truffaut, Buñuel, Bergman, and Bertolucci. (Everyone may substitute her or his own list of those I revere but have no space for.) Then there is, in the words of Satyajit Ray, "the presence of the essential thing in a very small detail which one (screenwriter, director, cameraman, actor) must catch in order to expose the larger things."

I was intrigued to discover what the criteria of others on the jury might be. My companions under the president, Jeanne Moreau, were the French cinematographer Philippe Rousselot, the Italian director Gianni Amelio, the African director Gaston Kaboré, the Mexican critic Emilio García Riera, the Russian screenwriter Maria Zvereva, the French producer Michèle Ray-Gavras, the French actor/director Jean-Claude Brialy, and John Waters, about whom no American reader will ask, "And who the hell is he?"

A mixed piece of casting—to some, even daring. The *Times* remarked that I might "just be the one person in the world with whom Mr. Waters has least in common." Well, the *Times* was wrong. Though we may have differed now and then about the nature of masterpieces, we laughed together such a lot that we thought of having a photograph taken of ourselves, suitably enlaced, for the press.

The seclusion of the jury was not quite on the level of that which was prevailing concurrently for a certain trial jury on another continent. But it was a relief to have strict rules to adhere to when journalists pestered us for tips about which film was out in front in the laps of jury viewing. An icon of cinema glamour, immensely intelligent, truly literate in many cultural dimensions, Jeanne Moreau was a president from whose discipline we would not have dared to stray in blab. Her personality is an unlikely combination, at once imperious and lovable. She worked us hard, yet never once did she try to influence the opinion of any jury member. For myself, I learned from the exchange of preoccupations with others. A cinematographer reads the language of images while I receive the language of the script, an actor intuits where performance betrays or transcends a role, directors see structure, and producers see how much ingenuity and imagination are achieved in proportion to a little or a lot of money spent. To become aware of all these component aspects was to understand better what film sets out to do and how far it succeeds.

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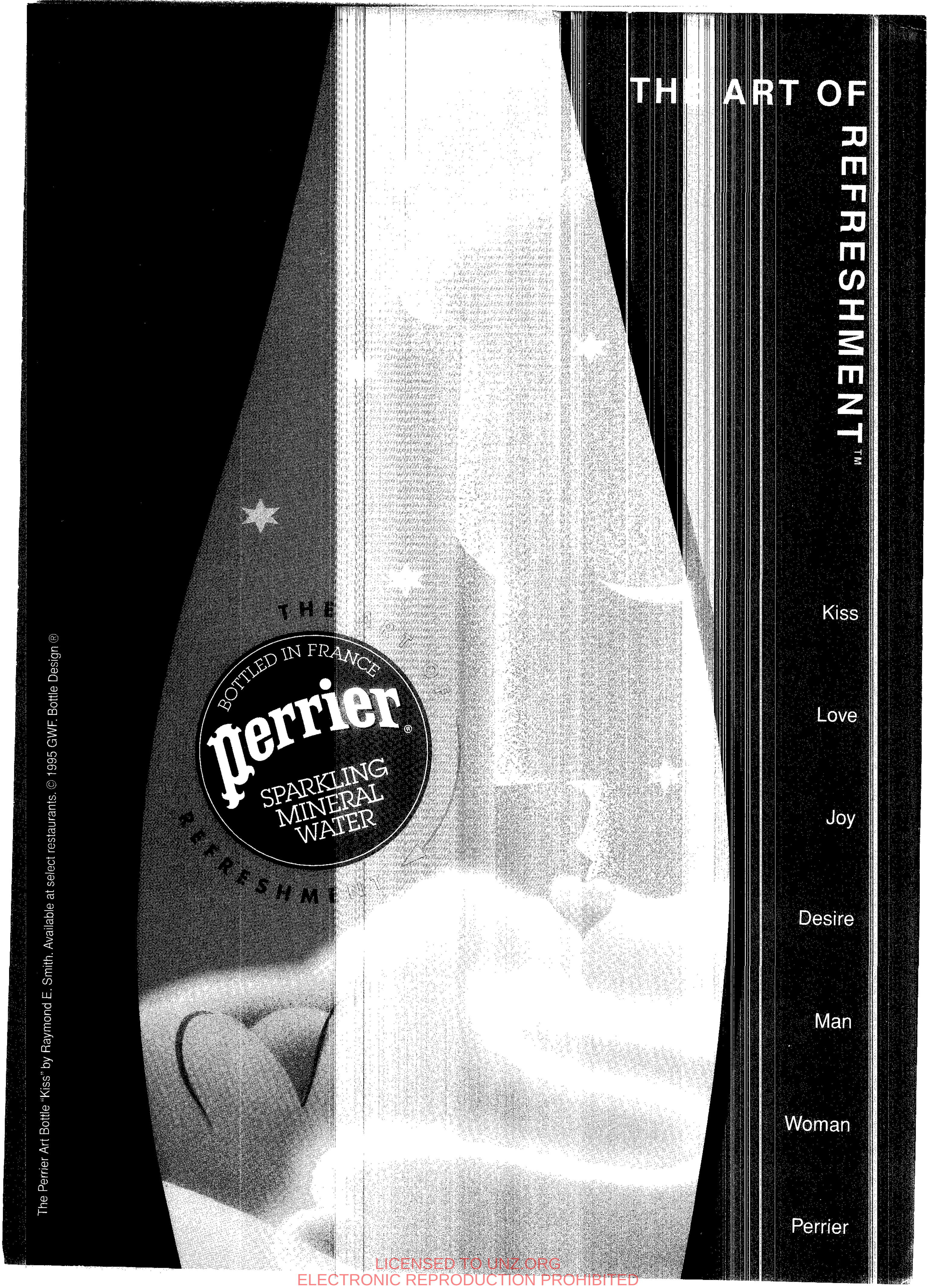
CARLTON
DUPUY-BERBERIAN

Film may re-create the past or create a future, but in its flickering beginnings it was the unique art form to capture, alive, the continuing present moment. Not surprising, then, that two themes were obsessive in a number of the films we saw. One was the new nihilism—youths on two continents living at the dead end of our century on emotionless sex and catatonic violence. The second was the self-destruction of Sarajevo.

Twelve days spent seeing films and discussing them. The lives, the countries, the world created out of the imagination I entered became the real world. To emerge from the Palais des Festivals onto the beachfront and into the glare of a concerted gaze—that was fantasy. Cannes is a city of voyeurs. What are they hoping for as they press to the glass of the flag-fluttering cars? Their faces sag in disappointment: alas, I am not Sharon Stone. And if I were? What solace could I offer for the fate of looking on?

By the way, there was the masterpiece I had hoped for, and we gave it the Palme d'Or. In it was the presence of the essential thing in small detail, caught in order to expose the larger things. Emir Kusturica's "Underground" is a splendid masquerade of life triumphant, in brass-band bravura, through half a century in the birthplace of the avatars of war which used to be Yugoslavia. ♦

DUPUY-BERBERIAN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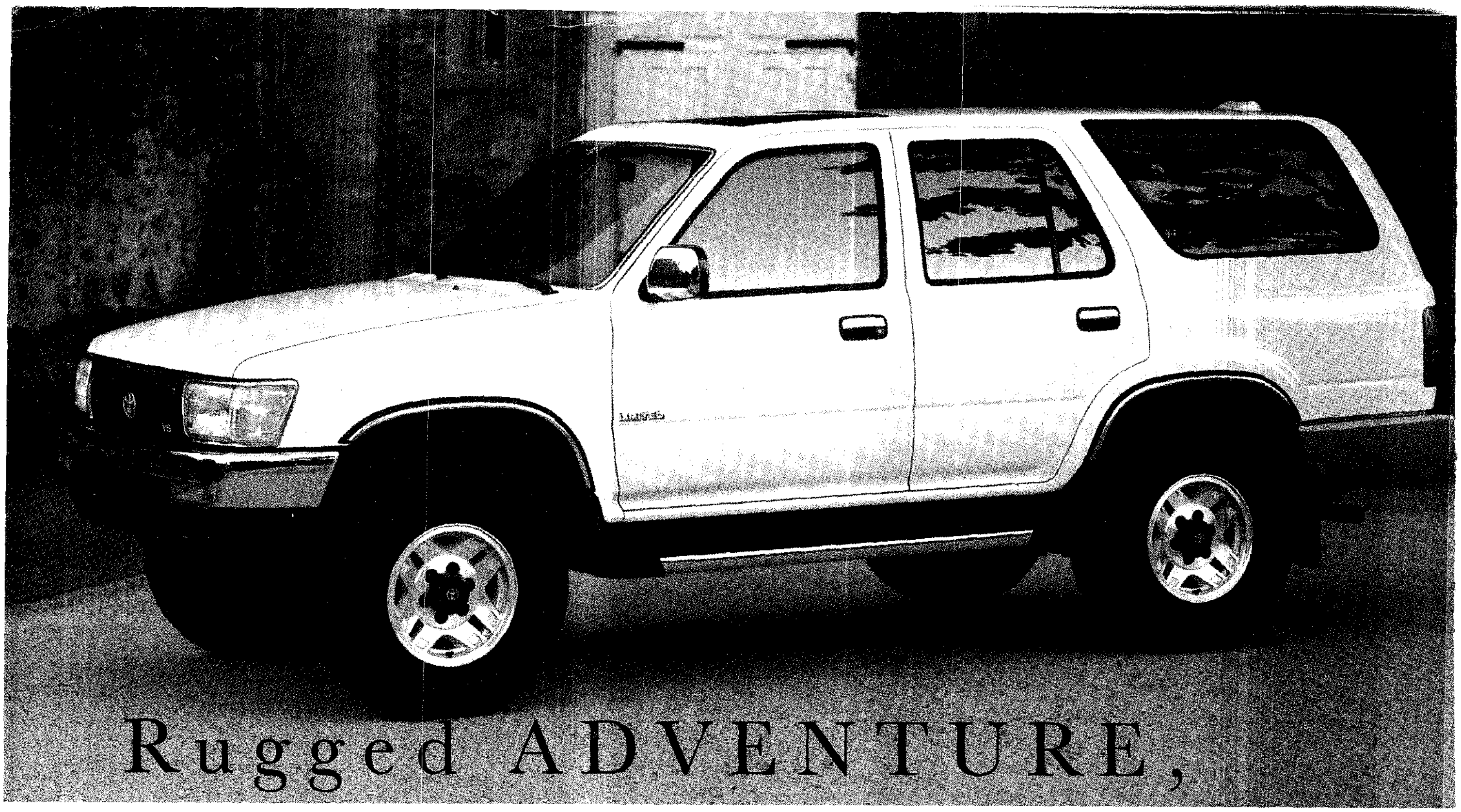

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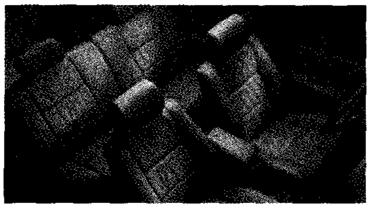

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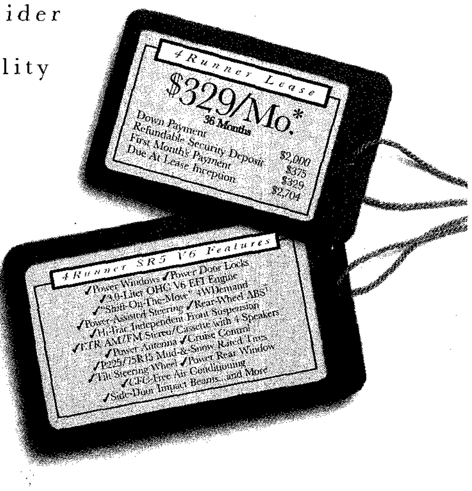

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